FEB 21 1980

Not sent to depositories

ICA 1.11: 18/2

FORUM

ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM

A JOURNAL FOR THE TEACHER OF ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

8923

Volume XVIII Number 2 April 1980

New Contin

G200/157

174

Editorial

Glancing over the articles assembled for inclusion in this issue, as a teacher might look over a new class of students, our eye was arrested by one writer's remarks about the value of "putting students in situations where the element of pretending is almost wholly absent." The writer questions, in particular, "the artificial 'communicative' kind of practice in which a student acts as if he is saying something as a tourist, a policeman, or a member of the SPCA to someone who is pretending to be listening and responding as a shop assistant, a tourist, or a bullfighter."

Such pretending (role-playing) has been a fairly important element in language teaching not only in modern times but throughout the centuries (although we might more accurately characterize some of the more recent dialogic and dramatic activities as *expressive* rather than *pretensive*—a distinction that should be carefully noted). Considering the writer's protest within the perspective of the history of TEFL methodology, we find that within only a few decades the ideal of language teaching has moved through (it seems to us) at least three quite distinct phases with regard to "pretending" as a part of language practice. Although, as we have mentioned, the element of pretending has, throughout history, been present, in greater or lesser degree, in many language classes, it wasn't much in vogue in the days (not so long ago) when grammar, translation, and pattern practice dominated the scene. However, in the '60s, and even more in the '70s, a surge of interest in "communicative practice" made a strong and rather successful bid, in more "progressive" classrooms, for such practice to replace, or at least strongly complement, the "artificial" manipulation of sentence patterns and grammar drills. Now we find that this kind of practice, which at the time had seemed a long stride toward realism, is dubbed "artificial," and it is strongly recommended that it be superseded (or, again, at least complemented) by the introduction of "situations where the element of pretending is almost wholly absent."

Nor is the above-quoted suggestion (see Koster's article in this issue's News and Ideas section) our only evidence of this new outlook. Several articles that will appear in future issues plead for a more realistic (and meatier) *content* for the language course—a content not only relevant in certain superficial ways to the students' interests but real in terms of their deeper educational needs and life activities.

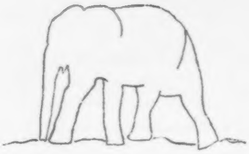
Perhaps a word of caution is in order. Does this idea—whose time has apparently come—mean that teachers everywhere, in order to be "with it," must cease to use the play-acting activities that may be working well for them? Must we give up "pretending" altogether? By no means. But it probably behooves us all to recognize herein a new dimension and to ponder its implications for motivation and meaningfulness in our classes.

Just as this issue was going to press, the FORUM was saddened to learn of the death of our colleague Ruth Crymes, in a plane crash in Mexico City, 31 October 1979, while on her way to participate in the Sixth Annual MEXTESOL Conference, in Oaxaca, Mexico. A professor of ESL at the University of Hawaii, Ruth was well known for her contributions to our profession, and to the TESOL organization in particular, of which she was currently president, having earlier served for many years as editor of the *TESOL Quarterly*. Her many friends and colleagues will miss her.

FORUM

ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM
A JOURNAL FOR THE TEACHER OF ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

BROOM HILDA
I JUST WROTE A SHORT STORY LISTEN...
"Once upon a time there was a lovely young princess who lived in a castle in a far-off mythical kingdom
The End"
WELL, YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIT, IT HAS SCOPE!



Techniques for Teaching Reading 2
JAMES WARD, *Chulalongkorn University, Thailand*

English for Specific Purposes: A Mexican Case Study 8
RONALD MACKAY, *Concordia University*

Teaching Pronunciation (While Seeming to Be Doing Something Else) 13
THOMAS J. KRAL, *Peace Corps, Afghanistan*

How a Paragraph Hangs Together 16
JOE D. PALMER, *Concordia University*

Dialogues as Models of Communicative Competence for Trainee Teachers 20
JAMES GARTON, *Goroka Teachers' College, University of Papua New Guinea*

Teaching Grammar to Aid Comprehension at University Level 25
STELLA STATMAN, *Bar Ilan University*

The Check Procedure in a Technical English Training Course 29
EDWARD I. BURKART, *English Language Institute, The American University*

Book Notes 35

NEWS AND IDEAS

Canada. A Communicative Approach to Teaching the Simple Present and the Present Progressive, ALEX SHARMA 37

Iran. The Relative Clause as a Creative Tool in Introductory Composition, SANDRA SCHNELL-DOUBLEDAY 38

Cultural Content and Reading Comprehension, ABDOLJAVAD JAFARPUR, SAEED RAHBARNIA, ELIZABETH R.TUERS, and SEID M. ZIAHOSSEINY 40

Malaysia. Communicating Comprehension through Graphics, JUDY KOH SHOOK YIN 41

Netherlands. On Exploiting Native Speakers, C. J. KOSTER 42

Nigeria. Why Don't We Ask "Why"?, K. R. LAKSHMINARAYANAN 43

Singapore. RELC Regional Seminar 44

Sweden. Sixth AILA World Congress 1981 45

United States. Individualizing the Lower-Level Composition Class, LINDA LONON BLANTON 45

LETTERS

England. On Labeling Functional-Notional Units, ROBERT O'NEILL 46

Sri Lanka. Teaching Verbs at the Primary Levels, F. B. DE LILE 47

Zambia. News from Zambia, FREDRICK BENNETT 47

THE LIGHTER SIDE 48

Volume XVIII
April 1980
Number 2

Anne Covell Newton
Editor

Acknowledgments and copyright notices appear inside back cover or with copyrighted item

Cover design
"The Seven Continents"
Graphichouse, Ltd.

Techniques for Teaching Reading

JAMES WARD
Chulalongkorn University
Thailand

James Ward has taught English in Puerto Rico and, more recently, in Thailand, where he served as evening supervisor of teachers at the American University Alumni in Bangkok during 1978–79. He also taught at the Bangkok Christian College and at Thamassat University, as well as developing material in English for special purposes for the English Language Centre, Chulalongkorn University, and participating in the production of a weekly television series. Mr. Ward is at present finishing work for his educational specialist degree (foreign language education and curriculum and instruction) at the University of Tennessee.

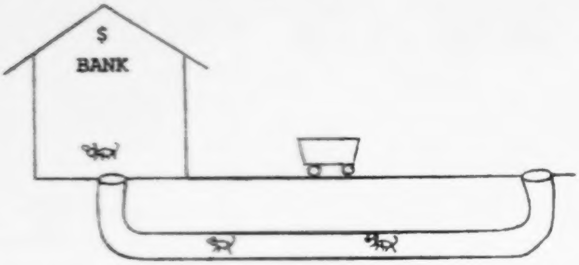
Reading is perhaps the most difficult language skill to teach, for it involves so many different elements: mechanical eye movement, grammar, vocabulary, phonetics, spelling, and intellectual comprehension. It is also one of the most fruitful skills to teach: the majority of students of English as a foreign language may never speak much English, but most of them will have to read English in order to complete their university studies.

The reading lesson generally consists of three steps: (1) motivation, (2) presentation of material, and (3) exploitation or follow-up activities. In this article I will discuss each of these steps and describe a number of techniques that I have found effective.

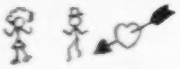
Motivation

To motivate is to be creative. The more interesting the reading topic—or the more interesting the teacher can make it seem—the easier it will be to teach.

If a picture accompanies the reading, create interest by asking questions about it. You might ask your students to find all the things in the picture that begin with a certain letter, or certain letters, of the alphabet. If there is no picture, draw one. For example, here is a picture I drew to motivate students to read a newspaper article about a "sewer rat" gang that pilfered a Parisian bank:



If the story is about an intangible idea, you can still draw a picture, such as this one, used to represent "love":



Or you may wish to use brainstorming (a technique I will describe later in this article). Vary your approach. We all have our favorite techniques, but if we overdo them our students become bored.

Presenting the material

Variety is a key to success in presenting a reading selection. If the selection consists of five paragraphs, you might want to use three or four different methods of presentation. For the initial reading you could do one of these:

1. Have the students read the entire selection to themselves.

2. Read the entire selection (if it is not too long) to your students, and then do a paragraph-by-paragraph analysis,

using some of the techniques described below. Caution your students to keep their eyes moving, even if there is a vocabulary item or grammatical pattern they do not understand. Remind them that you will return to the paragraph later.

3. Read the selection paragraph by paragraph. If the passage is, for example, six paragraphs long, you may wish to read the first three while the class follows along, then proceed with a detailed examination of what you have read (using some of the techniques below); then repeat the procedure for the last three paragraphs.

4. Try a sandwich approach. Read the introduction and conclusion, and then ask the students to guess what they are going to read about. (This could also be used as a motivating technique). Or you might read the body of the selection and have students guess an introduction and a conclusion.

After you have analyzed a paragraph or series of paragraphs, read all of the material again so that the students can pull together the vocabulary, structures, and meaning, and grasp the passage as a whole.

If you don't finish a selection in a single lesson, reread in the next class period the part you have covered, asking some of the same questions again, before you go on to finish the selection.

You may wish to outline the selection either before or after you do the other activities. This enables the student to view the unit as a whole instead of as isolated fragments.

PARAGRAPH ANALYSIS

Here are some techniques you can use to analyze the individual paragraphs.

Asking comprehension questions

You can write on the board comprehension questions for the students to find answers to while they read the selection or hear it read. This helps them to concentrate on finding an answer rather than centering their attention on vocabulary or structure. As a result, their rate of reading increases. This technique also discourages the word-by-word or translation approach that many students have been trained to use. You may sometimes wish to ask the comprehension questions after, instead of before, the students read the selection. The gifted teacher will skillfully interweave both approaches. (In addition to asking specific comprehension questions, you may wish to ask the students to close their books and tell you what the paragraph they have just read is about.)

Comprehension questions may be ranked from easy to difficult as follows:

1. Questions answerable by *Yes* or *No*, or *True* or *False*. Example: *Did Mary eat a hamburger? (Yes, she did.* or *No, she didn't.)*
2. Information questions *(Who, What, Where, When, How, How much, How many, How long)* answerable by directly quoting from the passage.
3. *Why* or *How* questions requiring the student to pull together several ideas from the passage.
4. Inference questions. These require the student to understand what the selection implies.
   Example: *How do you think the parents of the bride felt?*
5. Questions that require the student to make a value judgment or form an opinion.
   Example: *Do you think she should have scolded him?*

Choose the type of question to fit the level of both your class and the individual student. For example, if the level of the class is low but you have a few exceptional students, don't ask the quicker ones a question with an easy *Yes* or *No* answer.

Make sure the students understand the questions you ask them; they may have particular difficulty with the first and second words. To help them with this problem, you may, after asking the question, ask them which question word they hear:

T: *What has* he done? (pronounced *What's*)
S: What.

Then ask them to identify the second word:

T: *What has* he done? (pronounced *What's*)
S: Has.
T: *What is* his name? (pronounced *What's*)
S: Is.

After you are sure that the students understand the question, have them answer it.

Note: Initial question words *Is, Was,* and *Does* are often confused; *Wh-* questions are more easily understood. *Or* questions *(Did he go home or to the store?)* often baffle students. You may, to begin with, simplify such questions as follows: *Did he go home, or did he go to the store?*

To give the students a more difficult task you may ask them to make up a question beginning with a particular question word:

The boy ate banana ice cream.

T: Make a question beginning with *What kind.*
S: What kind of ice cream did the boy eat?

This exercise gives the student practice in the use of past tense *did* and present tense *eat*. This is a challenging task for the student because it makes him think. All too often the teacher does the thinking for the students.

Because forming questions is a particularly difficult task for the students, I recommend the following procedure: First, read the passage and check comprehension, using the question patterns already illustrated. Second, go over the passage phrase by phrase, and ask the students to make up questions, using the same questions that you previously asked them.

If a student has difficulty in formulating a question, you may want to use this forward build-up method:

The girl ate a banana fudge sundae.

T: Make a question beginning with *What kind*.
S: (*Silence*.)
T: What kind of sundae did...etc.

You may also want to diagram the question on the board—using arrows, deletion marks, etc.—to show how it was constructed from the original sentence.

Another technique is to write a sentence on the board and have the students create as many questions as they can think of, using the question words you give them. (Don't forget tag questions [*He ate a mango, didn't he?*] and *either...or* questions [*Did he go home or to the movie?*].) When the students have had practice with these cued responses, the final step is to release controls and have them try to make up any questions they want to. The teacher may call on students to answer these questions; or the student making up a question may call on someone to answer it; or students may form pairs and ask each other questions. Sometimes you may wish not to require answers at all.

You will find that this technique dramatically improves comprehension. I recommend it for any passage that you feel is particularly difficult. (It should, of course, not be abused by overuse.)

The following variation of the asking-comprehension-questions technique requires the students to think carefully about what the author is saying. It entails writing a series of questions on the board and asking the students to select the questions that are answered in the paragraph. For example:

> In the United States a university professor is granted freedom from his duties approximately every seventh year for travel or advanced study. This period of freedom is called a "sabbatical leave." Its purpose is to give the professor experiences which will make him a wiser person and a better teacher when he returns to the university.

Directions: Select the questions that are answered in the paragraph.

1. Does this paragraph define *sabbatical?*
2. Who is the professor?
3. When is a sabbatical given?
4. What is the purpose of a sabbatical?
5. How does one become a wiser person?

Notice that question 1 calls attention to the defining quality of the passage; question 5 is an upper-level question forcing the reader to infer information from the passage.

Instead of using questions, you might make up a True/False exercise. For example:

1. This paragraph defines *sabbatical leave*. (True/False)
2. The professor is Dr. John Coleman. (True/False)

Rapid reading and reading by phrases

Have the student quickly scan a short paragraph, counting the occurrences of one particular grammatical form: the articles *a* and *the*, specific prepositions, phrases, etc. This forces the students to move their eyes rapidly across the page, and not to rely on pointing with a finger to each word one at a time.

You can also help the students practice reading in phrases by reading a sentence aloud to them and asking them to tell you how many phrases they heard. For example:

The old man in the blue Cadillac honked his horn at the policewoman.

T: How many phrases do you hear?
S: Four.
T: What's the first phrase?
S: *The old man.*
T: The second?
S: *In the blue Cadillac.*

etc.

OR:

T: How many phrases do you hear?
S: Four.
T: What's the second phrase?
S: *In the blue Cadillac.*
T: The first?
S: *The old man.*

etc.

Notice that the second pattern of questions is more difficult than the first. You should move into it only after the students have become familiar with the technique, thereby grading the exercise from easy to more difficult.

Pronouns and adjectives

Students often have difficulty figuring out what noun or noun phrase a pronoun refers to. After a paragraph has been read, select several pronouns and ask the students to tell what they refer to. (You will be surprised at the confusion these little words can create!) Or ask the students to try to remember the adjectives in a given paragraph. They may quote the adjectives directly from the paragraph, or—which is much more difficult—infer the adjectives from their understanding of the paragraph. This calls into play the students' command of grammar and vocabulary, and their imagination, as well as their general comprehension of the paragraph.

Example:
Ron Becker is a quiet man with a sense of humor. He is a strong family man and has always enjoyed doing things with and for his children.

T: What adjectives describe Mr. Becker?
S: *Quiet, humorous, devoted* (to his family).

Verbs

The following activity highlights the subject and object of a sentence: Choose a transitive verb and ask the students to tell you *what* (verb) *what* in the sentence.

Example (with the verb *eat*):
T: The boy sitting under the tree was eating a mango.
S: *The boy—a mango.*

Or underline some verb-like words and ask the students to tell you which is the main verb, and why the others are not.

Key words

Choose a short passage from the reading selection and ask the students to point out the most important (key) words. Then have the students make sentences containing the key words or phrases without looking at their books. This forces the students to practice grammar and to retain the material they have just read.

Example:
The student at the end of the row was extremely lazy. He slept late every day. Nevertheless, he expected to get a good grade in all his classes.

T: What are the key words in each sentence?
S: 1. *student was lazy*
2. *slept late*
3. *expected good grade*
T: Now close your books. Who can change the key words in number 1 into a sentence? etc.

After practicing the verb forms used in the passage, you can vary the exercise by having the students change the tense. The students can thus reconstruct the passage, first in the past, then in the present tense.

"Talk and Listen"

You can easily adapt Richard Via's concept of "playing with English"[1] to a reading lesson that contains dialogue if you want to extend the lesson into oral practice. Choose a portion of the dialogue from the reading selection:

"But why were you late?"
"I got caught in a traffic jam."
"You should have left earlier."
"I know. I won't be late again."
"Try not to be."

Then prepare two file cards or pieces of paper like this:

A: But why were you late?	A: ______________ .
B: ______________ .	B: I got caught in a traffic jam.
A: You should have left earlier.	A: ______________ .
B: ______________ .	B: I know. I won't be late again.
A: Try not to be.	A: ______________ .

Have two students stand up for this activity. Ask them to look at, and listen to, each other as they say their lines. Before saying each line, the speaker should glance at his card, then look up and make eye contact with the other person while saying as much as he can remember of the line written on the card. If he does not remember the entire line, he may glance back at the card, then look at the other person again while speaking. Students truly enjoy this activity.

Sound-letter correspondence

Students need to be taught that certain sounds correspond to certain letters. One way to do this is to ask the students to look for all the words in a given paragraph that have a particular vowel sound—regardless of how the vowel sound is spelled in the various words. (You may want to supplement this activity with a minimal-pair drill.) Concentrate especially on the vowel sounds that are difficult for your students. For example, you may ask them to copy all the words that have the same vowel sound as the words *head, led, dead, said*.

Synonymous sentences

You can highlight the grammatical structures in the reading selection in various ways. One way is to write a sentence on the board and ask the students to find or copy a sentence in the reading that conveys the same *meaning* as the one you have written. Then have them underline the syntactic differences or tell you about them.

Vocabulary

Teaching vocabulary has presented problems for EFL teachers for many years. How should we teach vocabulary? By synonyms or antonyms? By matching? By telling the students to look up the new words at home? By giving them definitions?

If we stop and think, none of these methods really teach the student anything: they presume prior knowledge of the lexical item. To do matching, for example, a student must already know the definition. These exercises are most suitable for a rapid review of previously learned vocabulary, and if they are used for review, they serve their purpose.

What happens when the second-language learner encounters a new word? Usually, he stops reading and either uses a dictionary or asks the teacher. From there it's a short step to the traditional translation method of language learning—translating word by word from the new language to the native language. This is *not* reading.

Native speakers do use the dictionary, of course, but only rarely. When we read in our first language, we usually puzzle out the meaning or guess it by using clues—grammatical, stylistic, and typographical (dashes, footnotes, parentheses). In the sentence you just read, for instance, there is one example of a grammatical clue and there are two examples of typographical clues. Teaching students what these clues are and how to use them develops the reading process into a true skill. Let me illustrate the kind of skill-building I mean:

He put the baby chickens into an incubator. The box was kept warm by light bulbs. The young chickens were raised there.

---

[1] See "Talk and Listen," by Richard Via, in *English Teaching Forum*, *15*, 2 (April 1977).

T: As you read the passage, try to guess the meaning of *incubator*. (The teacher writes *incubator* on the board.)

In the above example, the new lexical item in the first sentence (*incubator*) is defined in the second and third sentences. The student who has been trained to rely on the teacher and his dictionary to decipher new vocabulary items will probably stop reading when he comes to the word *incubator*, and thus will miss the definition in the next sentence. Trying to guess the meaning is perplexing to the students; after they have tried, you can point out all the clues in the passage. You may wish to help them arrive at the meaning by writing several possible definitions on the board, as in a multiple-choice exercise.

A clever way to dramatize this kind of contextual guessing is to cover the front of a magazine with a piece of paper that has a hole cut out of the center, thus exposing only a portion of the magazine cover. Ask your students to try to guess what the picture on the magazine cover is. Naturally they can't—but as soon as you remove the covering paper they can. This demonstrates the point that only in context can we guess the meaning of the picture—or of a new lexical item that we encounter in our reading.

When you see students writing a translation above the English word, have them erase it. When you see them using a notebook of vocabulary items, or an English/native-language dictionary, ask them not to. Encourage them to write sentences using the new words in their notebooks.

There are some clever ways to give a student a definition indirectly if the meaning cannot be inferred from the passage, or if his memory simply needs to be refreshed:

1. *Word Expansion*. Select the words to practice and draw a chart for them on the board:

Noun	*Verb*	*Adjective*
work	work	workable

They work in a factory.

T: What part of speech is *work* in this sentence?

S: A verb.

T: *I like my work*. What part of speech is *work* here?

S: A noun.

T: What is the adjective form of *work?*

etc.

Students may or may not be able to expand from this base to other forms. Therefore this is a useful vocabulary-building tool, because it encourages students to reinforce their working knowledge of the meaning of prefixes and suffixes.

2. *Anagrams*.

T: What does *struggle* mean?

S: (*silence*)

T: It has five letters.

S: (*silence*)

T: (*writes* TGFIH *on the board*)

S: Fight!

3. *Fill in the Blanks*.

T: What does *lexicon* mean?

S: (*silence*)

T: It has ten letters. (*The teacher writes ten dashes on the board, and fills in one blank at a time, randomly, until the students guess the synonym*:

— o — a b — l — r y)

S: Vocabulary!

4. *What Word Means...?*

T: In this paragraph (or sentence) what word means the same as *silent?*

5. *What's the Opposite?*

T: In this passage (or sentence) what word means the opposite of *peace?*

6. *Brainstorming*. Write on the board a key word from the reading, and ask the students to tell you all the associated words they can think of. For example:

marriage: wedding, ring, love, cake, honeymoon, divorce, etc.

7. *Cloze Procedure*. Write a short passage on the board in the form of a cloze passage—that is, with every fifth (or sixth, or tenth, etc.) word deleted, substituting a blank for each deleted word. Have the students fill in these blanks with their own words by referring to the original reading selection. This exercise can be simpler or more challenging, depending on how many words you delete.

This concludes my collection of activities for paragraph analysis in the reading lesson. Teachers often stop at this point, but because it is essential that students view the reading selection as a whole and not as a series of sentences in paragraphs, I would like to make another recommendation: As you read the story, outline it on the board; when you or the students reread it, refer to the outline. Eventually the students will be able to outline tne entire passage themselves. First, however, you can have them fill in your skeleton outline to form a paragraph; then expand the process to include the whole selection. Note transition words and phrases. Ask the students if and how the author could have improved his writing. The outline will be helpful for this.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

The strip story

After your class has studied a paragraph or story, divide the class into groups, with the number of students in each group corresponding to the number of sentences in the story or paragraph. Give each member of the group a piece of paper on which you have written one of the sentences of the story. Give them a minute or so for each student to memorize his sentence, and then collect the pieces of paper. Each student should then tell his sentence to the other members of his group, and the group should then arrange the sentences into a coherent story or paragraph.

You may vary this activity by cutting the sentences in half and having the students combine them before arranging the sentences into a paragraph.

Readers' theater

If a selection can be divided easily into various roles or parts, you can use a readers' theater approach, assigning students to read the various roles. (The teacher may take one of the roles or simply listen.) Remember to include the role of narrator where appropriate.

You should have the students read the selection several times, helping them to find and bring out different kinds of meaning according to the different ways in which a word, phrase, or sentence is read.

As the students read, you should note the errors in pronunciation and correct them after the students have finished reading the selection, drilling the class first as a whole, and then individually.

Dialogues

If possible, change a part of the story into a short conversation and have two students act it out. You can then manipulate the dialogue by substituting different words or phrases. You might change the verb tenses or have students transform the dialogue into a short narrative, converting it into indirect speech. You may change the characters, the time, or other elements and have the students make the appropriate resulting changes in the dialogue. Again, you may change dialogue into a cloze passage (that is, deleting words at regular intervals and substituting blanks for the deleted words) or have the students write it from memory. You can also pair the students off to write their own dialogues and perform them for the class—or, mixing the pairs, have a student perform a part that another student has written.

Another useful manipulation is the "vanishing dialogue": After the students have had sufficient oral practice on the dialogue (written on the board), you can gradually erase lines—or parts of lines—starting at the end and working toward the beginning. Continue in this way, having the students "read" the entire dialogue each time, including the missing parts, until no visual clues remain on the board. Afterwards have the students recall what the dialogue was about, by saying: "Tell me one fact about the dialogue," "What do you remember?" etc.

Create a contextual situation for the dialogue by asking questions about the setting: "Where are the characters talking?" "What were they doing before the conversation?" "What did they do after the conversation?" etc. This is more interesting than for the teacher simply to tell the students what the situational background is. You can create the same effect by asking for information about the characters: "How old is the speaker?" "Where was he born?" "Where did he go to school?" etc.

Finally, have the students make value judgments about the speakers' actions: "Why do you think Ann and John didn't go to the party?" "What would you have done in this situation?" etc.

Grab-bag sentences

Prepare photographic copies of the story or a paragraph in the reading, cut each copy up into individual words, and put each set of words into an envelope. Divide the class into groups, give each group an envelope containing a set of words, and have them make as many sentences as they can from their set of words.

To vary this activity, instead of cutting up words in advance, have each student write down two words (nouns or verbs) from the story, then have the groups create sentences by using these words and adding appropriate articles, pronouns, prepositions, etc., where necessary.

Row sentence

One student starts off his row by recalling—or paraphrasing—one sentence of the reading passage. The next student must add another sentence that follows logically, and so on down the row. This technique develops memory and underscores the importance of transition words.

Crossword puzzles

Create, or have the students help you create, a crossword puzzle using the new vocabulary from the reading selection.

Sentence prediction

Read the students a sentence from the story and ask them to guess the next sentence. If you read *There are many problems in making a TV show,* they might respond with a sentence beginning with the transition phrase *for example*. To increase the difficulty of this exercise, you may read a second sentence and ask the students to guess the sentence that precedes it. You might say, for example, *Three weeks passed, but the new dress did not come from the store*. A student might respond with something like *I was so excited when I bought the dress*.

Controlled composition

Have the students write a short paragraph based on the reading lesson. For example, ask them to write complete-sentence answers to questions about the story which will, in the process, create a simple paragraph. Or you may wish to try a dictation or a dicto-comp. The latter technique involves dictating a few sentences of the reading selection while the students simply listen, then having them write the sentences as closely as possible from memory, making up the rest with whatever seems grammatical and appropriate to them. For upper-level students you may expand a dicto-comp to include an entire paragraph. This forces them to listen carefully and to retain a large aural input.

continued on page 12

English for Specific Purposes: A Mexican Case Study

RONALD MACKAY
Concordia University

Ronald Mackay first taught ESP to radio engineers in the Canary Islands in 1960 and has since held teaching positions in the University of Bucharest, Romania; the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England; and The National Autonomous University of Mexico. He has also been a visiting professor in Spain, Bulgaria, Poland, Singapore, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Denmark, and the United States. He currently teaches undergraduate courses in TESL and graduate courses in applied linguistics at Concordia University and is Academic Director of the ESL courses in the TESL Centre. He has published three books on language teaching and has written a number of articles dealing with teacher training, special-purpose language teaching, and reading. Mr. Mackay is now actively engaged in the improvement of language curriculum evaluation procedures.

It would seem reasonable to assume that the more closely a second-language teaching program is based on the identified uses to which a specific group of students will put the language, the more successful and effective the course will be (Selinker, Trimble, and Vroman 1972). This is the rationale underlying special-purpose language teaching, and the aim of this article is to trace the case history of a project in English for Science and Technology in order to show the steps and decisions involved in preparing and teaching one example of an EST course to near-beginners at university level in Mexico.[1]

The project discussed in this article was one of several resulting from the establishment of a cooperative link between the Centre for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CELE), National Autonomous University of Mexico and the Department of (Applied) Linguistics, the University of Edinburgh. This cooperation, begun in 1974, had three distinct though related purposes: (1) to develop and test materials intended to provide students with English language skills as a tool in their academic/professional studies; (2) to document the progress and stages of the project so that the procedures followed could, possibly in a modified form, be used as a model on which other projects with similar purposes could be patterned; (3) to train local personnel at every stage of the project so that a cadre of well-qualified and experienced applied linguists could be built up.

In particular, the project as described here deals with that part of the work carried out cooperatively between CELE, UNAM and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Production (FMVZ), UNAM. Its goal was to provide undergraduate animal-scientists and veterinarians with the particular variety of English and English-language skills that would be most useful to them during their studies.

A MODEL FOR ESP CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The first step in the project, after selecting the personnel to be involved both in CELE and in the FMVZ, was to establish an operational framework within which the project could be carried out. It was necessary to draw up a procedural model which would allow different individuals to work in different stages of the project at the same time, under the supervision of the director, while ensuring that these different components could be finally fitted together to make an integrated whole. Hence we drafted a set of procedures, which began with the gathering of information about the students and their needs for a language other than Spanish, and which ended with an evaluation and revision of the materials developed to meet these identified needs.[2]

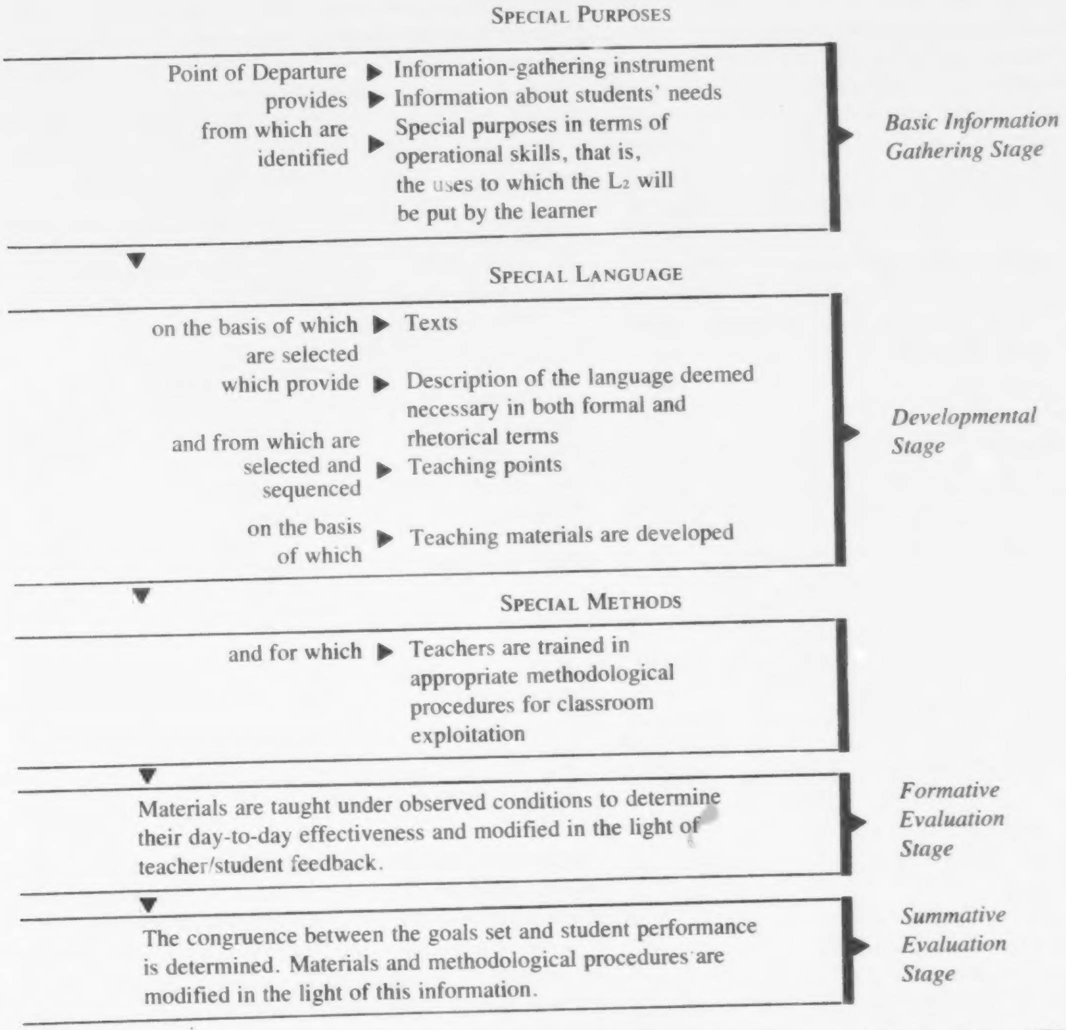
---

[1] I would like to acknowledge the debt owed to the teachers of the pilot materials, Profas. Laura Cao-Romero, Ruth Kemp, and Dorotea Litvak, and to my colleagues in C.E.L.E. for much of the groundwork which made the program a success.

[2] Similar practical attempts to model the numerous activities involved in foreign or second-language syllabus design are discussed in Wilson (1976).

While operational models have their uses, it must be borne in mind that there is no "ideal" procedure for planning and preparing a syllabus. The steps will inevitably depend on specific factors in the individual situation. But a well-planned procedural model does help to ensure that no essential steps are left out.

Figure 1


SPECIAL PURPOSES
Point of Departure
provides
from which are identified
Information-gathering instrument
Information about students' needs
Special purposes in terms of operational skills, that is, the uses to which the L₂ will be put by the learner
Basic Information Gathering Stage
SPECIAL LANGUAGE
on the basis of which are selected
which provide
and from which are selected and sequenced
on the basis of which
Texts
Description of the language deemed necessary in both formal and rhetorical terms
Teaching points
Teaching materials are developed
Developmental Stage
SPECIAL METHODS
and for which
Teachers are trained in appropriate methodological procedures for classroom exploitation
Materials are taught under observed conditions to determine their day-to-day effectiveness and modified in the light of teacher/student feedback.
Formative Evaluation Stage
The congruence between the goals set and student performance is determined. Materials and methodological procedures are modified in the light of this information.
Summative Evaluation Stage

The Procedural Model for ESP Syllabus Design as Adopted in 1975 in CELE, UNAM (Mackay and Klassen 1976)

The Basic-information-gathering stage

Initial examination of purported needs amply demonstrated that in planning syllabuses for ESP work an inadequate distinction has been made between current real needs, future real needs, and future hypothetical needs. It is not uncommon for future hypothetical needs to so influence the program that current needs are overlooked altogether, and only a very small proportion of the learners ever find a use for the costly and lengthy instruction given.

Another kind of "need" that tends to add to the confusion is imposed by the well-meaning teacher who has a preference for certain kinds of instruction, quite independent of the students' identifiable needs.

An exhaustive questionnaire was therefore prepared for both the subject-matter teachers and the students in the FMVZ. Previous experience had shown the inadequacy of information-gathering instruments which were left for the students to complete; they were returned with the answers to some questions left blank, while misunderstanding of questions was obvious from conflicting answers, and anomalous answers were difficult or impossible to follow up. It was therefore decided that the questionnaire should be conducted as a structured interview in which a trained interviewer would put the questions directly to the staff member or student and note his answers. In this way deficiencies of the type of questionnaire mentioned above could be overcome.[3]

The structured interview was conducted individually with forty-two professors and fifty-two students. They represented every field of study and every semester in the undergraduate degree program in the FMVZ. The results provided us with a clear picture of the needs of the students as represented by both the staff and the student body. In essence, the results indicated that a knowledge of *no* language other than Spanish was *necessary* for a student to complete his undergraduate studies satisfactorily. However, it was felt by 78% of the staff and 58% of the students interviewed that a reading ability in English would permit students to increase significantly the quality of their academic and professional knowledge. No skill other than a reading skill emerged as a need.

The developmental stage

The Texts. In attempting to determine whether the texts on which the reading instruction would be based should be authentic target discourse or an "easier" variety, we experimented with texts that differed along two dimensions: (1) the readership aimed at, and (2) familiarity of content to the student. In terms of level of readership, we discovered that texts written for (*a*) undergraduate students and (*b*) practicing professional veterinarians motivated the student more strongly than texts written for high-school students. Related to this outcome was, no doubt, the relative familiarity of the students with the content of the texts. High school biology was already familiar to them and so the task of struggling with the language only to retrieve information already possessed was felt not to be worth the effort. On the other hand, the reward of gaining new, but related, information from a text was regarded as being well worth the struggle with the language.

The use of authentic reading materials also allowed us to identify the characteristic organizational principles of texts dealing with animal science as well as the formal characteristics in terms of sentence structure and specialized vocabulary.[4]

Two techniques were used to identify some of the "reading difficulties" of Spanish-speaking students reading English, so that special attention could be given to these areas of difficulty. One technique used cloze and modified cloze tests; the other used translation. Until the results of such work can provide us with teaching points objectively arrived at, our selection of difficulties was inevitably based on informed intuition and observations made by the teachers experimenting with the pilot materials, as well as the results of student introspection.

The Exercises. The exercise types used to practice the teaching points were also arrived at as a result of prior experience and familiarity with successful practices. Exercise types included "anticipation" exercises intended to encourage an attitude of expectancy in the reader. We saw this as developing habits of "prediction" in reading, which according to current psycholinguistic theory are characteristic of successful readers. These prime the student for the kind of information to expect and the way in which it is organized. An example of one such anticipation exercise is:

The diagram below represents the way in which the information is organized in the text you are about to read. Translate the headings into Spanish. Discuss, in Spanish, the kinds of information you would expect to find under each heading:

FOREIGN BODIES IN THE ESOPHAGUS
(SMALL ANIMALS)

Examples of foreign bodies
1.
2.
3.

Obstruction characteristics
1.
2.

Clinical signs depend on
1.
2.
3.
4.

Means of detection
1.
2.
3.

Now, go on to read the text and see how many of your expectations are fulfilled.

Lexical exercises included rephrasing, word-building, the use of contextual clues, and the use of lexical relationships to relate one part of the discourse to another (Berman 1975). In rephrasing exercises, the student is provided with simple paraphrases of difficult vocabulary items or phrases and is asked to underline the corresponding word or phrase in the text. For example:

> The link between altered behavior and the diseased stage in farm animals is very close. Thus there is a tendency for obviously abnormal behavior which presumably occurs in response to an abnormal physical state to be used as the identification index for particular disorders. For this reason a number of diseases are known by behavioral descriptions. Examples of these include staggers, gid, and lockjaw.

Rephrasing: Underline the words in the text that correspond in meaning to the underlined words in the following sentences:

1. There is a close *relationship* between the *pathological condition* and the *modification of conduct* in farm animals.

2. There is a *general inclination* to use abnormal behavior as *the means of naming particular diseases*.

---

[3] A detailed account of how the questionnaire was produced is discussed in Mackay and Mountford (1977), pp. 21–38.

[4] The topics dealt with included Behavior and Clinical Disorders in Farm Animals, Preconditioning Cattle for the Feedlot, Gastrointestinal Parasitism in Ruminants, etc. (FMVZ/CELE 1975).

In such exercises the student is not being asked to supply synonyms of difficult words but is being provided with glosses of difficult terms contextualized within a sentence. Therefore his attention is focused on the items *in use* rather than in isolation.

Word-building exercises help the student become familiar with affixes and how they alter the meanings of words. For example:

Complete the sentences below so that they agree with the information given in the text you have just read.

1. Supportive treatment is ______ to cure acute cases of equine encephalitis.
   sufficient/insufficient
2. A biological vector is ______ by an agent of a disease.
   infected/uninfected
3. A medical cure for equine encephalitis is at present ______.
   unavailable/available

Syntactic exercises focused on sentence-level grammar and discourse grammar (that is, relationships *between* sentences as opposed to *within* sentences)—for example, exercises on the use of logical connectors—provide the student with practice in identifying words that link information in a logical way and permit the reader to "follow the argument" of the text. For example:

Read each word or phrase below:

because	porque
however	sin embargo
therefore	por consiguiente
that is (to say)	es decir / o sea
such as	tal (es) como

Now write the most appropriate word or phrase from the English list into each of the spaces in the text so that the information conforms to that in the passage you have just read.

a. At birth, the pig's gut is sterile, ______, it is free from all micro-organisms.
b. ______, it is flooded with lactobacilli within a few hours.
c. After a few days, a large number of micro-organisms bacteria, protozoa, and viruses are present in the alimentary system.

Information-extraction exercises encouraged students to take structured notes, often in diagrammatic form, and were similar in format to the anticipation exercises.

Translation-type exercises encouraged the students to reproduce the basic information in the text in their mother tongue, Spanish. For example:

Translate the headings and complete the diagram in Spanish by rereading the text.

Feedlot Facilities
include

Feeds	Equipment for	Holding Facilities	Facilities for Moving Cattle
1.____	______	______	*a*. ______
2.____	______		*b*. ______
	______		

Despite the climate of disapproval surrounding the use of translation as a learning strategy, we felt that this kind of exercise was justified. After all, although the students had to read in English, the information gained had to be employed *in Spanish* and integrated into their existing knowledge *in Spanish*.

Our observations and the feedback from our teachers who were using the materials permitted us to sequence the exercise types within any instructional unit for what appeared to be optimum learning. It was generally agreed that the most functional sequence was:

Anticipation exercise
Rephrasing incorporated into text
Contextual reference
Word building/re-ordering of words/sentence completion
Intrasentential connectors
Intersentential connectors
Note taking
True/False
Translation/reproduction exercises

We felt that, presented in this order, each exercise derived maximum profit from the one preceding it and was maximally useful to the one following it.

Methodological procedures in the classroom

It should be evident to the reader by now that a great deal of Spanish was used in our classrooms. Because the students' need for English did not extend beyond the ability to read, we felt that it would have been unduly costly in terms of time, and uneconomical in terms of effort, to insist that the language of the classroom should be English only. Our teachers were bilingual and were encouraged to ask a question in English followed immediately by the same question in Spanish. If a student felt he could respond in English, he did. If not, he answered in Spanish and no class time was taken up with the teacher eliciting oral English responses from tortured students. Since the goal of the course was to train students to demonstrate their understanding of English texts related to their studies in their mother tongue, the lack of spoken English in the classroom was not seen as a drawback in any way to achieving this goal. In order to ensure that the students had an "internal" model of how the text would be read in English, the teachers read the passages aloud several times as students followed with their eyes.

Formative evaluation stage

Feedback at this stage of formative evaluation was provided in two ways. "Evaluation sheets" were completed, on which the teachers noted both their own and the students' reactions to the text, teaching points, and exercise types. Moreover, the project director sat in on classes, to observe the results of the interaction between teacher, student, and materials. It was therefore possible to alter materials and procedures in conscious ways in a fairly controlled manner.

The summative evaluation

Finally, the materials and course of instruction, which lasted one term (approximately seventy hours), were evaluated in terms of the students' ability to read and understand academic and professional discourse in their field of study. These tests were designed not to compare the achievement of one student with that of another, but to demonstrate the students' ability, individually, to demonstrate their effectiveness at extracting information from a text written in English. Tests were conducted before, during, and at the end of the course of instruction. The tests consisted of authentic texts taken from textbooks of the kind students would encounter during their studies—that is, those that were included on reading lists supplied by course instructors at the beginning of the term. The text, approximately 500 words long, was followed by eight multiple-choice questions. This was followed by a group of five jumbled sentences which had to be re-ordered to form a coherent paragraph. This paragraph, too, was taken from an authentic textbook on animal science. The last section of the test was a modified cloze test with multiple-choice items instead of blanks.

While no absolute claim can be made for the reliability of the tests, it was found that 94% of the students showed improvement in their reading over the period of the course. The preparation of appropriate and reliable measures of reading comprehension for our students has been identified as a priority area for investigation by the Department.

The students' attitude toward the materials used is perhaps most tellingly reflected in the reduction in the number of student dropouts. Our first pilot-course has a drop-out rate of only 4% (6 students out of 153), whereas the "general English" course had a drop-out rate of 50%. Subsequent courses employing the modified specialized materials have had similarly high rates of course completion.

CONCLUSION

There are many problems to be ironed out in the preparation of specialized courses for scientists, technologists, and others with a clearly identifiable need for proficiency in one, some, or all of the skills of English. The matter of non-homogeneous groups; the extent to which it is feasible, practicable, and desirable to teach skills in isolation; the provision of appropriate tests to determine the effectiveness of the materials, the teaching, and the learning; classroom procedures appropriate to the goals, materials, and maturity of the students; all these are matters which must be closely examined if ESP courses are to be consistently improved with experience. However, even the limited success of our pilot EST project in the FMVZ was sufficiently promising to persuade the authorities to encourage the preparation of additional specialized courses for other faculties and schools of UNAM.

REFERENCES

Berman, R. 1975. Analytic syntax: a technique for advanced reading. *TESOL Quarterly*, 9, 3 (September 1975).

FMVZ/CELE. 1975. *A course in reading comprehension for undergraduates in the Facultad de Medicina y Veterinaria*. FMVZ/CELE, UNAM, Mexico, D.F. 20.

Mackay, R. and B. Klassen. 1976. Problems and principles in the teaching of English for science and technology. Mimeographed. Pre-Convention Workshop, TESOL Convention.

Mackay, R. and A. Mountford. 1978. *English for specific purposes: a case study aproach*. London: Longman.

Selinker, L., L. Trimble, and R. Vroman. 1972. Working papers in EST. Mimeographed. University of Washington.

Wilson, G.H. 1976. *Curriculum development and syllabus design for English teaching*. Singapore: SEAMEO, RELC and Singapore University Press.

Techniques for Teaching Reading continued from page 7

Written exercises

Most textbooks follow up the reading selections with writing exercises such as multiple-choice, matching, fill-in-the-blanks, etc. Choose the ones you feel will be most beneficial to your students. If the textbook exercises seem inadequate, try writing your own.

Conclusion

I began this article by stressing the important role that reading plays at the university level. When I first began teaching high-school and university students overseas, I was told that their problems were mainly with the spoken language, and that they could read English with facility. However, when I found them translating numerous words and phrases in the English texts into their native languages, the misconception about their ability to read was erased as quickly as the translations!

In order to teach our students to read without translating, we must first motivate them to want to learn to read—and to want to read particular selections. We must guide their attention and then examine the text in such a way as to help them extract meaning from what they read. Finally, in order to insure that each individual reading experience contributes to their general reading skill, we must devise follow-up or exploitative activities that will help them internalize and retain what they have gained from the reading experience.

Teaching Pronunciation (While Seeming to Be Doing Something Else)

THOMAS J. KRAL
Peace Corps, Afghanistan

Thomas J. Kral is Associate Peace Corps Director for Education, Afghanistan. He also serves as supervisor of Peace Corps teachers assigned to Kabul University and the secondary and vocational schools in Afghanistan, and as coordinator of intensive workshops held in the provincial centers of Afghanistan for Afghan teachers of English. Dr. Kral has taught in Turkey, Vietnam, and Iran; was for five years a lecturer at Thamassat University in Bangkok, Thailand; and has served as Fulbright professor of American Language at Bolyoi University, Romania. After obtaining a Ph.D. in education from the University of Illinois, he served for a year as English instructor at the Central YMCA Community College in Chicago before undertaking his present assignment in June 1976.

When pronunciation drills are confined to the practice of minimal pairs or the repetition of individual words or sentences, students are often able to mimic the teacher's production of a target sound within those drills, but they may continue to make the same pronunciation errors when the target sound appears in another context. For that reason it may be wise for the teacher to disguise his focus on pronunciation and design learning activities that will elicit student responses requiring the use of vocabulary items or grammatical structures which contain the target sounds he wishes the students to practice. In this way, the preliminary work that a teacher may do in the area of minimal-pair contrast is not a separate activity removed from the realm of meaningful communication. Instead, the initial ear-training and repetition drills may become an essential adjunct to real communication in the language.

Several different types of learning activities can be constructed to give the student of English practice in producing target sounds with which he may have a problem. For beginning students who have a limited control of English structure and vocabulary, the drills may be of a word-association variety or a type that requires little grammatical manipulation. With more advanced students, pronunciation work may be done within the context of more difficult transformation drills or a type of question-and-answer or logical deduction activity. In all of these learning activities the student's attention is focused on communicating correctly within the context the teacher has established. The teacher, however, has structured the context so as to insure the use of specific target sounds.

Word-association drills

The word-association drill is one of the easiest ways to give the students practice on specific problem sounds while the manifest purpose of the drill appears to be vocabulary study. Concentrating on the phonemes /æ/ and /ɛ/, the teacher might ask his class for antonyms of the following words: *sick, sit, thin, more*. The students would respond with *well* (or *healthy*), *stand*, *fat*, *less*. In drills of this type it is sometimes useful to call the students' attention to the fact that the words they will select all contain /ɛ/ or /æ/, if they are having problems making the correct word association.

Transformation drills

Phonemes that carry grammatical significance, such as /s/, /z/, or /əz/ for pluralization, possessive formation, or third person singular present, and /t/, /d/, or /əd/ for past formation, are easily treated through transformation drills which stress a regular structural change from one sentence to another.

In an example of such a drill, the teacher might make statements regarding his daily routine and ask the students to repeat the same information, but with one of the members of the class serving as the subject of the sentence. The use of the word *too* in sentence-final position can be a correlative transformation in this drill to make it more like a real conversational exchange.

Teacher: I come to school every morning.
Student: Kasim comes to school every morning, too.
Teacher: I go home for lunch at noon.
Student: Kasim goes home for lunch at noon, too.
Teacher: I work from this book every day.
Student: Kasim works from this book every day, too.

A simple statement-to-question transformation can become communicatively relevant if a correlative transformation occurs at the same time. In a drill of this type, the teacher might give statements that are true for his country or region and require the students to ask questions using the same vocabulary items about their country (or their region of the country). If this drill is intended to secretly give practice in /z/ and /s/, the use of the auxiliaries *is* and *does* and a carefully chosen vocabulary will elicit these problem sounds, as in the following format:

Teacher: California has mountains and deserts.
Student: Does Afghanistan have mountains and deserts?
Teacher: Many high-school boys drive cars in California.
Student: Do many high-school boys drive cars in Afghanistan?
Teacher: California has many traffic problems.
Student: Does Afghanistan have many traffic problems?

This statement→question transformation can be carried even further by having another student give a short answer to the question his classmate has constructed. Students tend to become interested in the simulated conversation that evolves, and their attention is no longer focused on the phonemes the teacher considered when he wrote the exercise. In this way he can see whether the students have indeed mastered the problem sounds, and if he finds they have not, he can determine which phonological environments seem to create difficulty.

Appropriate-response drills

In conducting an appropriate-response drill the teacher points to an individual in the class and gives verb phrases which the other students are to make positive or negative—whichever is appropriate—using the name of the student indicated as the subject of their statement. If the teacher wishes to give the students practice with the phonemes /s/ and /z/, he can use the following format:

Teacher: (*pointing at Abdul*) is Casey Jones.
Student: He isn't Casey Jones.
Teacher: (*still pointing at Abdul*) is Abdul.
Student: He's Abdul.
Teacher: (*pointing at Mohammad's empty chair*) is absent.
Student: Mohammad's absent.

Question-and-answer drills and referred questions

In these two activities—question-and-answer drills and referred questions—the student's concern is focused on either giving the correct answer to the teacher's question or asking another student a question the teacher has referred to him, requiring him to report back the answer he receives from his classmate. In both cases the question is formulated using certain target sounds in the vocabulary items or in the grammatical structure of the sentence. For practice with the phonemes /s/ and /z/ the teacher conducts the referred-question drill in the following way:

Teacher: Ask Mobin if he reads a newspaper every day.
Student: Mobin, do you read a newspaper every day?
Mobin: No, I don't.
Student: No, Mobin doesn't read a newspaper every day.
Teacher: Ask Rahim what kind of fruit he likes.
Student: Rahim, what kind of fruit do you like?
Rahim: Melons.
Student: He likes melons.

Constructing sentences

Students may be asked to construct sentences from items arranged structurally within columns written on the blackboard. In this procedure, an individual chooses one item from each column, adding the proper inflection and arranging the items to make a sentence. For work with the phonemes /t/ and /d/ the teacher might require the students to make past-tense statements using items like those listed below:

Ed	type a letter	last night
Ted	laugh at the joke	yesterday
Pat	watch the cock fight	last week

Further mileage might be gotten from this drill if, once a student has produced a correct sentence, the teacher asks *Wh*-questions about the sentence which will elicit the /t/ and /d/ phonemes:

Student A: Ted watched the cock fight last week.

Teacher: Who watched the cock fight last week?

Student B: Ted did.

Teacher: What did Ted do last week?

Student C: He watched the cock fight.

Teacher: What did Ted do at the cock fight?

Student D: He watched it.

In these follow-up questions, the teacher does not simply ask information questions with an intonation of 2-3-1; instead, he uses the intonation 3-3↗ to signal lack of understanding and the need for repetition.

Contradiction drills

Pronunciation practice can also be applied to activities in which the students are required to correct a statement made by the teacher which contains an item of misinformation. Focusing on the phonemes /s/ and /z/, the teacher might construct a drill like the following:

Teacher: Afghanistan has one of the highest rainfalls in the world.

Student: No it doesn't. It has one of the lowest rainfalls in the world.

Teacher: Afghanistan doesn't have any mountains.

Student: Yes it does. It has many mountains.

Teacher: Afghanistan is one of the most populated countries in the world.

Student: No it isn't. It is one of the least populated countries in the world.

Contradiction drills can be used in teaching stress variation in speech, in addition to giving practice on certain phonemes. The teacher writes a sentence on the blackboard and reads it as it would normally be spoken. Students repeat. The teacher then changes one of the function words within the sentence and adds a tag question. A student will correct him, repeating the sentence as it is written on the blackboard but stressing the word that corrects the misinformation given by the teacher. The teacher then repeats this same process, changing another function word; he is corrected with appropriate changes in stress by another student.

Sentence written on the blackboard (for practice on stress and on the phonemes /v/ and /w/):

We've won every volleyball game in the last five weeks.

Teacher: We've won every volleyball game in the last four weeks, haven't we?

Student: No. We've won every volleyball game in the last five weeks. (stress on *five*)

Teacher: We've won every basketball game in the last five weeks, haven't we?

Student: No. We've won every volleyball game in the last five weeks. (stress on *volleyball*)

Teacher: We've lost every volleyball game in the last five weeks, haven't we?

Student: No. We've won every volleyball game in the last five weeks. (stress on *won*)

Deduction drills

This last type of activity discussed here is especially satisfying to the language teacher who contends that he is teaching the students how to think in the course of teaching a language. In the context of pronunciation, however, logical deduction activities provide the medium for the student to practice certain problem sounds while his attention and concentration are directed to giving a logically sound answer.

The teacher presents some information to the student in one sentence. He then asks the student a question that requires him to make a logical deduction from the information he has received. If the teacher is working on the phonemes /tš/ and /dž/, he might us the following types of questions:

Teacher: Steak costs three dollars a pound; cheese costs one dollar a pound. Hamid isn't rich; in fact, he's just a poor university student. What will he eat tonight?

Student: He'll probably eat cheese.

Teacher: Song Luu is from China. He likes all Chinese foods and teas. He's in a restaurant now, and he has a choice between Lipton's tea and jasmine tea. Which tea will he probably choose?

Student: He'll probably choose jasmine.

Teacher: Lamb in the United States often has a bad smell and a strange taste. Lamb in Afghanistan smells and tastes delicious. Abdul is in a restaurant now in the United States. He has a choice between chicken and lamb. What will he probably order?

Student: He'll probably order chicken.

"Hidden" pronunciation practice and real communication

The eight activities discussed above have proved successful in providing "hidden" practice within the area of pronunciation. No longer concentrating on pronouncing a certain phoneme, the students reveal to the teacher exactly how well they do control pronunciation. The teacher, by analyzing the environments in which the target phonemes occur, can determine which are especially troublesome, causing the student to mispronounce the target sound in some words but not in others. Most important of all, however, is the fact that these different learning activities provide a satisfactory means of giving the student pronunciation practice while he is communicating in a meaningful way. □

How a Paragraph Hangs Together

JOE D. PALMER
Concordia University

Joe Darwin Palmer is associate professor of applied linguistics and director of the graduate program of the Centre for Teaching English as a Second Language, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. He has also taught in Somalia, Thailand, and Egypt. Most recently he has been concerned with English for specific purposes (ESP).

One of the biggest problems that teachers face in trying to get students to understand what they read is to teach them to recognize the devices that glue sentences together. Sentences do not exist in isolation. In every kind of discourse—in conversation and in expository writing—sentences follow one after another. The meaning of any text can only be got at when the reader or participant realizes how sentences and utterances relate to what comes before and after.

The importance of discourse

Grammarians have traditionally been concerned mostly with sentences. And, indeed, every English teacher is an expert in explaining certain functions of sentences. For example, teachers have been trained to make clear how sentences express concepts, information, mood, emphasis, and attitude. Teachers know how to analyze a sentence according to its logical structure. They can point out the propositions that make up the simple sentences that are combined into compound and complex sentences. They can explain how word order shows interpersonal relationships through questions, imperatives, and negatives. They are aware of stylistic choices that emphasize one part of a sentence rather than another. However, most teachers have not been made aware of the linguistic devices that connect sentences together in discourse.

Discourse is important because it is the unifying arrangement of sentences (or utterances) that relates language to the contexts of situations and makes language meaningful in the real world. A discourse is a whole dialogue, or conversation, or a unitary piece of written language. It is a self-contained body of language that is used for some instrumental, expressive, or integrative purpose. Teachers and students alike know intuitively that certain pieces of language have beginnings, middles, and ends. They can point out the boundaries of any stretch of text when they understand its purpose. When a piece of language fulfills its intended function, the reader or listener can tell where it begins and where it ends.

Cohesion devices

Within a text there are several devices that help to hold the text together, that help to give it *cohesion*. These devices can be called grammar and vocabulary *signals:*

Grammar Signals

1. Reference
2. Ellipsis
3. Conjunction

Vocabulary Signals

1. Synonymy
2. Repetition
3. Superordination

Reference. Reference signals consist of substitute words such as pronouns, and of quantifiers (*some, any, few, one, a little, all,* etc.) when they substitute for noun phrases. Some substitute words replace verb phrases, and others whole clauses:

a. Auxiliary *do* (*This one works; I don't know whether that one* does.)
b. Modals (*They* could *but they* won't.)
c. Main verb *do* (*After many attempts he has still failed to* do *it*.)
d. Clause substitutes (*He thinks* so. *She believes* not. *I'll do* that.)

Other reference signals are pointing words (deixis) and comparisons. Pointing words are *the, this, that, these, those*. They may point backwards or forwards to items in other sentences. Any comparative form relates two or more items to each other. For example: *John's car is satisfactory; however, my car* is less *so*. Such words as *same, identical, like, such, similar, different, other, else, more,* and the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs make comparisons and so provide reference.

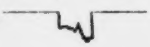
Ellipsis. An important grammar signal is the ellipsis, or omission, of something understood.

a. Non-repetition (*My pen is broken. My pencil isn't*.)
b. Modified nouns (*I prefer the large to the small*.)
c. To-infinitives (*They all tried to pass the test. Then I tried to*.)[1]

Conjunction. A conjunction is a sort of grammar signal that connects sentences; a conjunction that connects sentences is called a *sentence connector*. Sentence connectors are not cohesive in themselves—they do not reach out into the text—but because of their specific meanings they presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse. Their categories are:

1. Additive: *and, furthermore, that is, incidentally, likewise*
2. Adversative: *yet, actually, but, instead, in any case*
3. Causal: *so, in consequence, for, it follows, then, in this respect*
4. Temporal: *then, in the end, first, at once, soon, finally, meanwhile*
5. Continuative: *now, of course, well, anyway, surely, after all*

It might be helpful to reduce these categories to simple symbols so that they may be recognized easily when analyzing texts. One can think of them as follows:

1. AND: +
2. BUT: –
3. SO: ∴
4. THEN: -,-,-,
5. NOW: 

Synonymy. Vocabulary signals that help to give texture to a text are much easier to recognize than grammar signals. If two lexical items mean the same thing, they are examples of synonymy. We often find a renaming or glossing of a difficult word. For example: Pathogenic *organisms can be found nearly everywhere. These* disease-causing *organisms usually do no harm*.

Repetition. The repetition of lexical items is an obvious source of cohesion. For example: *The Gross National Product fell in 1948. This surprised those economists who had put great faith in the rise of the Gross National Product*.

Superordination. A general lexical item that refers to other words that have more specific meanings is called a superordinate term. For example: *Taxes will be increased on* automobiles, taxis, and motorcycles. Vehicles *such as these crowd our city streets*.

VEHICLES — superordinate
automobiles
taxis } subordinate
motorcycles

Often the words that are subordinate to a superordinate word form a lexical set; that is, they are a group of words that pertain to the same field of activity or thought.

All of these signals work together to give *texture* to texts. They make the sentences refer back and forth to each other so that the meaning, attitudes, and information of the writer can be understood by the reader.

Pointing out these grammar and vocabulary signals to students may be the most worthwhile thing an English teacher can do. Reading comprehension depends on understanding texts; it is not enough to understand sentences. Sentences are not sufficient carriers of meaning; they must be shown to hang together in texts. Then the texts must be shown to be part of the students' experience. That is, a reader has to connect what he reads with what he already knows.

---

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE: The three omitted items are (*a*) ***broken*** (*b*) any noun that represents something that could be large or small (*c*) ***pass the test***. In (*a*) and (*c*) the item omitted in the second sentence appears in the first sentence. In (*b*) the noun is omitted after both adjectives (***I prefer the large*** case ***to the small*** case). This is done, of course, only when the hearer knows, by the situational or linguistic context, what noun the speaker is omitting. Notice also that in this type of sentence it must be one repeated noun (not two different nouns) that is omitted.

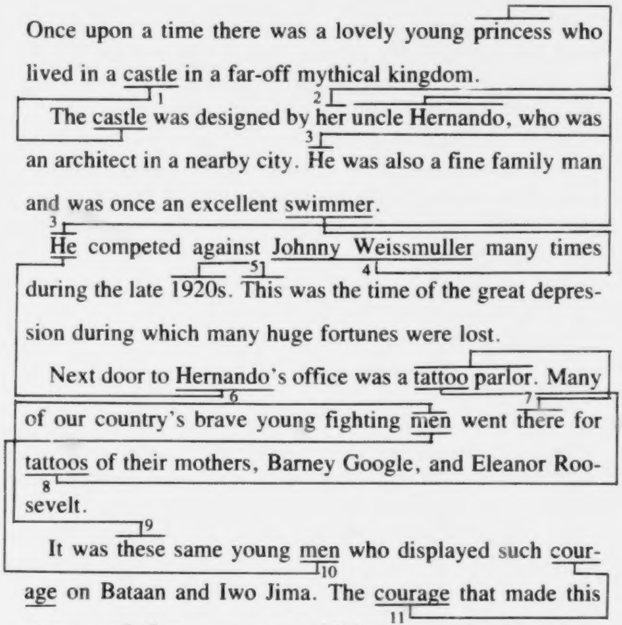
Understanding is recognizing what you already know, and then connecting what is new to that knowledge.

An example

How do these signals of textual cohesion work? Perhaps the clearest examples will come from a text that is almost completely incoherent. The "short story" from the comic strip "Broom Hilda" is intended to be funny.[2] What makes it funny is that it contains so many unrelated objects and facts which, from the standpoint of meaning, are inappropriately linked together. That is, the story is rhetorically incoherent. It is, however, textually cohesive; the grammar and vocabulary signals that link the sentences together are present. It is just this combination of good textual cohesion and a lack of rhetorical coherence that makes the story funny.

To see how the cohesion devices work, note the brackets that connect words and phrases. Brackets above the line are grammar signals; those below the line are vocabulary signals.

A SHORT STORY
from "Broom Hilda," by Russell Myers



Once upon a time there was a lovely young princess who lived in a castle in a far-off mythical kingdom.

The castle was designed by her uncle Hernando, who was an architect in a nearby city. He was also a fine family man and was once an excellent swimmer.

He competed against Johnny Weissmuller many times during the late 1920s. This was the time of the great depression during which many huge fortunes were lost.

Next door to Hernando's office was a tattoo parlor. Many of our country's brave young fighting men went there for tattoos of their mothers, Barney Google, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

It was these same young men who displayed such courage on Bataan and Iwo Jima. The courage that made this country safe for you, me, our children, zoo animals, and restoring old Hudsons as a hobby.

The End

1. *castle:* repetition of *castle*
2. *her:* reference to *princess*
3. *He:* reference to *Hernando*
4. *Johnny Weissmuller:*[3] superordination? The name of Johnny Weissmuller is a member of a lexical set defined by the word *swimmer*.
5. *This:* reference to *the late 1920s*.
6. *Hernando's:* repetition of *Hernando* and reference to *he*
7. *there:* reference to *tattoo parlor*
8. *tattoos:* repetition of *tattoo*
9. *these:* reference to *brave young fighting men*
10. *men:* repetition of *men*
11. *courage*: repetition of *courage*

You will see that we have not pointed out the cohesion devices that work inside of sentences. Sentences have internal cohesion whenever they are grammatically correct. Our main interest here is to show how the textual cohesion of paragraphs is achieved.

Interestingly, this short story includes two lexical sets made up of disparate items that are grouped together for comic effect: groups of words that belong together by virtue of their meanings:

mothers Barney Google Eleanor Roosevelt	These have hardly any connection. It is absurd to suppose that a man would be tattooed with a likeness of his mother, or Barney Google (a cartoon character), or Mrs. Roosevelt (the wife of a president of the United States).
you me our children zoo animals restoring old Hudsons as a hobby[4]	While the first three members of this set seem appropriate to the context, the author completes the set by adding two others that are humorously inappropriate.

There is much more that can be said about the clarity of each sentence in the short story. You might want to make further comments yourself on how each sentence fails to contribute to the story's unity and coherence. □

---

[2] The author wishes to thank Prof. G. S. Newsham for calling Broom Hilda to his attention.

[3] Weissmuller won gold medals for swimming in the Olympics in the 1920s.

[4] Hudson: a make of automobile (manufactured in the United States several decades ago).

Copyright
material
has been
deleted

Dialogues as Models of Communicative Competence for Trainee Teachers

JAMES GARTON
Goroka Teachers' College,
University of Papua New Guinea

James Garton first taught English to secondary students in Melbourne, where most of his students were recent immigrants from European countries. In 1977 he began his present work as lecturer in English at Goroka Teachers' College, University of Papua New Guinea. He finds his work there "endlessly fascinating," he says, because of the students' "lively and enthusiastic approach to all oral work, whether in the form of dialogues, discussions, or debates, all of which give opportunities for their considerable dramatic and humorous talents." In addition to teaching his classes, Mr. Garton writes materials for use in secondary schools and coordinates some of the methods courses at the college.

In Papua New Guinea, students of English for Trainee Teachers (ETT) face particularly difficult problems in achieving communicative competence as teachers in high schools. This is especially true for trainee teachers who will themselves teach English, the official language for education, business, and government (Forrest 1971).

How are trainee teachers, themselves speakers of English as a second language, and mostly from rural village backgrounds, to be trained in communicative competence in the high-school classroom? And what constitutes communicative competence in this setting? Wilkins notes that a communicative approach asks essentially two questions: what are the types of language interaction in which the individual is going to engage, and with what purpose? (Wilkins 1975: 176).

First, we can say that ETT students need a mastery of clear, correct speech and writing, and a firm grasp of comprehension, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, which are not a part of the traditional Papua New Guinea environment, at least in the forms required in technologically based Western or Westernized societies. A second and more difficult aspect of ETT is the need of the trainees for fluency in English for classroom communication and interaction.

A functional ETT model

Taking our two broad areas of concern, summarized as (*a*) the grasp of English required by a teacher for professional interaction and (*b*) communicative competence as a teacher in the classroom, a simple ETT model would appear as follows:

Stage 1: Tertiary entrance language competence, including comprehension, problem-solving, and decision-making skills

Stage 2: Models of communicative competence
  a. professional
  b. classroom

Stage 3: Application of models in microteaching and teaching practice in high schools

Stage 4: Teacher competence in professional and classroom communications

Some of the many problems that Papua New Guinean students face when learning English can be specified in terms of difficulties with grammar and vocabulary (Church 1975). However, there are also broader problems, such as the high level of toleration of miscomprehension when English is the medium of communication, and attempts to disguise this miscomprehension so as to survive the educational rat race (Johnson 1972: 3). Students are quite happy, or at least uncomplaining, when listening to their classmates speaking unintelligibly. Only when the teacher checks their comprehension by questioning, even to ask "What did he say?," are the students found to be uncertain about what has been said.

This tendency has to be combated by using listening comprehension techniques and dialogues as models of communicative competence at Stage 2 of the ETT model.

Models of communicative competence

Dialogues provide a more effective starting point for training in freer and more creative communication than is possible in the language laboratory or with the use of drills. The dialogue technique with the greatest potential for forming the basis of spontaneous interaction is the Talk-and-Listen dialogue described by Richard Via (Via 1977). Using this technique, a wide range of dialogues, some of them quite complicated, can be put to functional effect.

In the Talk-and-Listen dialogue, each student has a written dialogue to refer to, with only his own part of the dialogue shown, and a blank line for the other part. The main rule is that students must look at each other while either one of them is speaking. They are allowed to glance down at their "part" in between speaking, but must look up and maintain eye contact when speaking or listening. For this reason my students call the dialogues "eye-to-eye dialogues."

In large classes I have found it practical to have the whole dialogue printed on one sheet, with a dotted fold-line down the center. The sheets are handed to the class and roles chosen. Each student then folds his sheet and uses only the side with his part on it.

Dialogue 1: "What would you do if...?" (Hypothetical question)

A. What would you do if you won the Find-the-Ball competition?	*A*. ______
B. ______	*B*. Well, if I won Find-the-Ball, I think I'd buy a motorbike.
A. What about helping your parents to pay for your education?	*A*. ______
B. ______	*B*. But I'd have a lot of fun with my motorbike, and all my family could use it.
A. Ah, you're just kidding yourself!	*A*. ______

Dialogues like this one provoke lively and enjoyable talk sessions, in which the talk flows naturally after some practice, and it is talk based on a correct colloquial model. After using a simple dialogue such as Dialogue 1 as a starting point, it is possible to go on to more complicated dialogues that are focused more specifically on the needs of ETT students.

Professional models

The more general and "professional" needs of the students can be provided for with dialogues modeling situations where the skills of argument and debate, for example, can be practiced in polite English.

Papua New Guinea contains more than 700 *tok ples* or mother tongues, as well as two lingua francas, Hiri Motu and New Guinea Pidgin. In such a multilingual and multicultural situation, any existing structure of definite patternings of linguistic routines, of personality expression through speech, of uses of speech in social situations, and of attitudes and conceptions towards speech (Hymes 1971*a*: 56) is extremely difficult to type. Thus the only available model of communicative competence for the nation is an English-speaking one, and so the English model must be chosen in spite of any cultural clashes it may involve (Stratton 1977: 136).

For the individual student "sociolinguistic interference" or "communicative interference" becomes a problem (Hymes 1971*b*: 18). Communicative expectations differ from one cultural and linguistic situation to another, and our students find the English-speaking conventions for requests, discussion, argument, debate, meetings, and so on, difficult to master.

Therefore there is a need for careful and gradual practice of the conventions and established usage, ranging from practice in a controlled setting, as in drills (Wingfield 1972), to the important intermediate stage of practice of correct usage in dialogues, and ending in the actual experience of formal discussion and debate. Without this intermediate stage, the students will continue to use incorrect expressions and to become entangled in inappropriate and confused verbal strategies.

For example, few students are adept at expressing polite disagreement in English, and giving reasons for their disagreement, as practiced in the following dialogue.

Dialogue 2: "I disagree. In my opinion..." (Polite argument and disagreement, for example, at a school staff or board meeting)

A. Ladies and gentlemen, it looks as though we must raise the school fees next year if we are to provide better facilities for the school.	*A*. ______
B. ______	*B*. I disagree, Mr. ____. In my opinion, the fees are too high already.
A. How else can we get the money for new equipment?	*A*. ______
B. ______	*B*. Yes, I understand the problem. But already many parents find it difficult to pay the fees.
A. That is very unfortunate, and I feel sorry for them. But in the meantime the whole school suffers from the lack of facilities.	*A*. ______

B. ______________ ______________ ______________ ______________ ______________ ______________	*B*. Perhaps there is a compromise solution. Why can't the poorer parents pay in installments, or in other ways?
A. I'm afraid that wouldn't work. We need money as soon as possible.	*A*. ______________ ______________ ______________ ______________
B. ______________ ______________ ______________	*B*. Then in my opinion we should do without the new equipment!

A familiar topic, as in this dialogue, arouses general interest. Although mundane on paper, after tireless practice in pairs it was presented to the rest of the class in a vigorous and entertaining way. Different tones and gestures can be used, and their effect judged, and different roles can be tried, such as parent + teacher, councillor + headmaster, member of staff + headmaster, and so on. No doubt it helps, as in my classes, to have rhetorically gifted students from oral cultures.

Different forms of disagreement can also be practiced and discussed. As Wilkins notes, there are many different grammatical expressions capable of generating many sentences and utterances that have the same communicative function (Wilkins 1975: 177), and a function such as disagreement is probably more often performed implicitly, perhaps by expressing a different point of view (1976: 52). This factor can be introduced into the dialogues, as well as the follow-up discussion and analysis.

The use of Talk-and-Listen dialogues makes the correction of errors easier, and perhaps more effective. In a discussion or debate it is difficult to halt proceedings to correct the persistent omission of the article or the common use of such expressions as "To my opinion...." However, when the dialogues are used, the teacher can simply refer to the script for repetition, rather than making a labored correction.

Models for the classroom

Having provided models for general and "professional" communicative competence, we can then introduce dialogues aimed at improving the trainee teacher's communicative competence in the classroom.

After a little practice role-play in introducing oneself in the classroom, we can move on to classroom questioning techniques, which are the main concern of these exercises. (Papua New Guinean secondary teachers have only the duration of a two-year diploma in which to learn teaching skills, and so we must concentrate on effective teacher presentation.) What type of questions should we present as models for our ETT students? In their general teaching studies they learn about the overall characteristics of good questioning: variety, clarity, simplicity, proper sequencing, and so on. Even here, putting the models into effect is easier said than done. But from the point of view of language, the ETT student needs an awareness of the communicative categories that are most appropriate, or thought to be most appropriate, to clear understanding and logical responses from the students.

The communicative categories listed by Wilkins under the heading of "rational enquiry and exposition" provide a starting point. The list includes: deduction, proposition, hypothesis, substantiation, proof, conclusion, condition, consequence, result, inference, corollary, presupposition, interpretation, explanation, definition, illustration, exemplification, purpose, cause, reason, classification, comparison, contrast, generalization (1976: 52–53). Certainly our students need to be familiar with as many as possible of these categories, although the list is a daunting one. Much can be done, by way of introduction, with a good text that introduces some of these categories, such as Richard Yorkey's textbook on study skills (Yorkey 1970).

However, for a working basis for models of classroom questioning, there is more useful detail in the categories of the Illinois logic instrument, as adapted by Dunkin and Biddle (1974: 280–81). The categories employed are: defining, describing, designating, stating, reporting, substituting, evaluating, opining, classifying, comparing and contrasting, conditional inferring, explaining (with six subcategories of explaining), and directing and managing the classroom.

A distinction is drawn between lower cognitive demands and higher cognitive demands, with defining, designating, describing, stating, and reporting categorized as lower cognitive demands, and the other categories listed as higher cognitive demands (Dunkin and Biddle 1974: 286).

Practicing simpler communicative categories

These categories, although arbitrary, can help us to construct dialogue and role-play models for teacher questioning, emphasizing, at first, the lower cognitive demands, and with the general aims of clarity of questioning and an awareness of the types of responses that one can elicit in the classroom.

If, for example, the ETT students are to practice asking questions about a legend that is to be used as a basis for a microteaching class in the lower secondary grades, they must first be presented with the legend for discussion. I have used a Binadere legend from the Northern Province of Papua New Guinea, called "Why We Are Afraid of Snakes" (Dademo 1975). This legend explains the origins of snakes in the following way: a man called Jimago (the Binadere word for snake) was neglected from birth by his people, even by his mother, so that he never married, and kept completely to himself. One day the chief of the village called a feast, and everyone came and joined in the singing, dancing, and eating—all except the outcast Jimago. In anger and despair he decided to seek revenge on his people, so he came out of his house and shouted to the assembled crowd. Everyone stopped feasting and listened to him. He announced that he was going to turn himself into a snake, saying: "Wherever you find me in this wide world, whether I try to bite you or not, you will always fear me and run away from me." And Jimago turned himself into a snake, and since that day he has caused the people great fear.

When the students are familar with the lesson materials and with various types of possible questions and responses, they can be provided with a dialogue model of the way questioning could proceed in the classroom. This requires three parts in the dialogue: Teacher, Pupil A, and Pupil B.

Two minor points help the proceedings. One is that the teacher has the two pupils facing him so that he can ask them questions in turn. The other point is that instead of "A" and "B," a space should be left on the dialogue sheet for the names of the participants, to avoid confusion and to increase the authenticity of the exchange.

Dialogue 3: Classroom questions—designating and describing (based on the legend "Why We Are Afraid of Snakes")

T. According to the legend, whose fault was it that snakes were introduced into the world?	*T*. ________ ________ ________ ________
O. ________ ________ ________	*Orodobu*. It was the fault of human beings. [Designating]
T. Yes, that's right. How did his people treat Jimago, Gesebana?	*T*. ________ ________ ________
G. ________ ________ ________	*Gesebana*. His people treated him badly. [Describing]
T. Yes. What did Jimago do to get revenge, Orodobu?	*T*. ________ ________ ________
O. ________ ________ ________ ________	*Orodobu*. He turned into a snake and frightened the people away. [Describing]
T. Yes, and what warning did he give them?	*T*. ________ ________
G. ________ ________ ________ ________ ________	*Gesebana*. That they would always fear him and run away from him. [Describing]

This dialogue requires only the use of questions eliciting, designating, and describing responses (noted in brackets after each response). Designating is defined as a question calling for something to be identified by name, while describing calls for an account of something which has been mentioned or suggested (Dunkin and Biddle 1974: 280–81). These are two of the lower-cognitive-demand communicative categories described above.

Acted out with flair and used as a basis for role playing, a dialogue based on Talk-and-Listen techniques can give the ETT student a badly needed sense of the flow and structure of simple classroom questioning. Admittedly, there is much more to classroom discourse than this, as can be seen in the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). However, the aim here is to practice some basic practical aspects of teacher questioning in the classroom, and the models are necessarily simplistic.

Practicing complex categories

After the achievement of competence at the simpler level, it is time to tackle the more complex communicative categories.

Research by Dunkin (1975) tentatively suggests that these categories may be very much neglected in the Papua New Guinea classroom. Dunkin studied classroom interaction in primary classrooms in the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea and found that the more complex pupil responses of evaluation, classification, comparing and contrasting, conditional inferring, and explaining seldom occurred, and that the more simple responses, such as describing, naming, and doing routine exercises, predominated.

If these observations can be extended to our secondary schools—and personal observation, the opinions of colleagues, and tapes of secondary-school lessons all suggest that they can—then there is an obvious need to train our teachers in ways of eliciting the more complex pupil responses. Whether or not this can be properly achieved through the type of practice outlined here, we can still hope to evoke more awareness of the communicative possibilities in classroom questioning, as for example in the following dialogue, based on transcripts of taped lessons in lower secondary grades (Field 1975–76). Here the dialogue is laid out in a briefer format, but the procedures remain the same.

Dialogue 4: Classroom questions—designating, describing, defining, and classifying (Topic: Papua New Guinea's resources)

1. What are "resources"?	1. Things that Papua New Guinea has and sells overseas to get money. [Definition]
2. Yes. Give me an example. What sorts of things?	2. Copper. [Designating]

3. That's right. What type of resource is copper?	3. It's a mineral. [Classifying]
4. Can you name some other resources in Papua New Guinea?	4. Coffee. [Designating]
5. Yes. And what type of resource is coffee?	5. A cash crop. [Classifying]
6. Can you tell us what a cash crop is?	6. It's a crop that's grown for cash, and not just to use yourself. [Definition]
7. That's right. Now, what are some other cash crops?	7. Cocoa...tea...rubber. [Designating]

To the categories of designating and describing we have added defining and classifying. Careful analysis of these categories should be done, together with exercises from a relevant text, such as Yorkey (1970).

Teaching aids such as pictures, diagrams, tables, and so on, can be used by the dialogue participants, particularly as the dialogue develops into role play and peer teaching. It is up to the participants to cross these borderlines on their own initiative, when they feel confident enough.

We can continue to add more high-cognitive-demand questions to our arsenal.

Dialogue 5: Classroom questions—explaining, evaluating, opining (Topic: resources, continued)

1. What has to be done to copper before it can be sold overseas?	1. It has to be mined. (Explaining)
2. Right. What else has to be done to it?	2. It has to be processed. (Explaining)
3. Good....The copper has to be processed....	3. ————(Directing and Managing Classroom)
4. Now...can you think of any problems copper has brought to Papua New Guinea?	4. Yes...copper mining has caused pollution near the mines. (Explaining)
5. Yes. Is copper very important to Papua New Guinea? Make sure you give a reason.	5. Yes, it's very important, because it brings us lots of money. (Evaluating)
6. O.K. Now: do you think that future generations in Papua New Guinea will benefit from copper mining, in spite of the problems?	6. Yes, because the money from copper will pay for things like schools and hospitals and roads. (Opining)

The dialogues can be endlessly varied, with all sorts of subject matter, answers, aids, and techniques. The ETT student can review his subject matter and teaching techniques at the same time, with an emphasis on a heightened awareness of pupil responses.,

Admittedly dialogues used in this context concentrate on teacher-initiated learning activities. However, good teacher-initiated activities are essential to sound classroom learning, and without this basis confusion and vagueness will result.

If we can draw the attention of ESL teachers to the nature and limitations of the pupil responses elicited in class, we are on the way to improving the communicative competence of these teachers in the classroom, with obvious benefits for their pupils.

REFERENCES

Church, G. 1975. Twenty very common mistakes in secondary school English in Papua New Guinea. In *Secondary English syllabus handbook, 2.* Department of Education, Papua New Guinea.

Dademo, G. 1975. Why we are afraid of snakes. In *Eleven long legends*. Goroka Teachers' College, University of Papua New Guinea.

Dunkin, M.J. 1975. A study of classroom interaction in PNG primary schools. Interim Report, Konedobu, Papua New Guinea.

——— and B.J. Biddle. 1974. *The study of teaching*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Field, Sharon. 1975–76. Tapes and transcripts of secondary school lessons in PNG. Unpublished. Social Science Department. Goroka Teachers' College, University of Papua New Guinea.

Forrest, R. 1971. Problems in the training of indigenous secondary teachers of English. *English in New Guinea, 6,* pp. 6–15.

Hymes, Dell. 1971*a*. On linguistic theory, communicative competence, and the education of disadvantaged children. In *Anthropological perspectives on education*, ed. M.L. Wax, S. Diamond, and F.O. Gearing. New York: Basic Books.

———. 1971*b*. Competence and performance in linguistic theory. In *Language acquisition: models and methods*, ed. R. Huxley and E. Ingram. New York: Academic Press.

Johnson, R.K. 1972. A report on language problems of tertiary level students using English as a second language in Papua New Guinea. Research Report 19, Teaching Methods and Materials Centre, Faculty of Education, Unversity of Papua New Guinea.

Sinclair, J. McH. and R.M. Coulthard. 1975. *Towards an analysis of discourse*. London: Oxford University Press.

Stratton, Florence. 1977. Putting the communicative syllabus in its place. *TESOL Quarterly, 11,* 2, pp. 131–41.

Via, Richard. 1977. Talk and listen. *English Teaching Forum, 15,* 2, pp. 22–23.

Wilkins, D.A. 1975. A communicative approach to syllabus construction in adult language learning. In *The context of foreign language learning*, ed. A.J. Van Essen and J.P. Menting. The Netherlands: Van Gorcum.

———. 1976. *Notional Syllabuses*. London: Oxford University Press.

Wingfield, R. J. 1972. Conversational responses to statements. *English Language Teaching Journal, 26,* 2.

Yorkey, Richard C. 1970. *Study skills for students of English as a second language*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Teaching Grammar to Aid Comprehension at University Level

STELLA STATMAN
Bar Ilan University

Stella Statman is a staff member of the English department at Bar Ilan University and of the National Centre for the Improvement of Teaching at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Mrs. Statman moved to Israel from England in 1964, subsequently obtained an M.A. in English literature from Bar Ilan University, and has taught composition, literature, and English as a foreign language. For the past five years she has taught English for special purposes at advanced levels, and has been active in the preparation of materials for this specialization.

Most teachers of English as a foreign language are familiar with the frustrations of a student who tries to make sense of an English sentence by extracting the general meaning of the words he recognizes in some kind of linear order and then combining them according to the patterns of his native language. Everything is reduced to the barest essentials—a kind of pidgin understanding. All verb forms dissolve; only the meaning of the infinitive remains. If in his native language the noun precedes the adjective, whenever the student meets an unfamiliar adjectival form or a noun functioning as an adjective in English, the adjective will be understood as the head noun in a combination. Thus, *a market town* will be understood as *a town market*. A noun clause in the NP-subject position is another common source of confusion, especially if it begins with the relative *how* or *what*, etc. (*How the book will sell depends on the publicity*.) The student is hard put to decide whether he is dealing with a question or not. Occasionally, the student does succeed in his struggle towards comprehension because he recognizes a noun marker, a verb marker, or certain clause markers. These meaning-bearing structures enable him to create a frame on which he can hang the rest of the words. But even here, absolute, confident comprehension is rarely achieved.

The root of the problem

The cause of the student's difficulties is not hard to find. In his years of study in high school, the average student is drilled in all the common patterns of the English language and, as far as possible, given texts in which only these patterns appear. In order to make the texts relevant to the student's world, many current teaching materials present situational English. By the time he enters the university, the average student knows how to order a meal in an English restaurant, how to write a letter to a friend, how to describe a day in his holidays; he has read a modern play and a few English or American short stories. Now, suddenly, he finds he needs a new set of skills. He no longer needs to produce English sentences but only to understand them. His reading matter is no longer narrative or descriptive prose but professional texts in which the writer's art is that of exposition and the presentation of argument. The abstract noun clause is more likely to be the subject of the sentence than a noun or the first- or third-person pronoun. If his previous reading habits resulted in either slow or superficial reading, he must now increase his speed and learn care and precision.

Most university courses set up to help the student bridge the gap from the demands of high school studies to the requirements of university readings in English follow the same method. Students are given long, easy texts or light reading to study alone (the so-called "extensive reading"). The sole purpose of this exercise is to force the student to read a lot of English and thereby increase his speed and, hopefully, his familiarity with English sentence patterns. In class, professional texts are worked over thoroughly ("intensive reading"). Everything is touched upon; words are scrutinized and every opportunity taken to explain word classes, word markers, word families, affixes, polysemy, etc.; the sentence is broken down and time is spent on word order, conditional and comparative structures, subordinate and main clauses, etc.; the paragraph is taken apart and an explanation given of intersentential markers and the principles of discourse analysis. Finally, the rhetoric of the whole article is examined. Progress for the first few weeks, if not months, is slow indeed. Because there are so many points to be covered, most instructors grade their material so as not to overwhelm the students with too many explanations and to enable them to complete short articles and thereby obtain some sense of achievement and progress. As a result, it is often the middle of the university year before students are ready to attempt reading the kind of texts they will be expected to tackle throughout their university careers.

An introductory grammar course

I have found that difficult texts can be introduced much earlier by beginning the year with a short course in English grammar for purposes of comprehension. The course is not intended as a complete review of all aspects of English grammar; students in advanced English courses at university level do not need such a review. It is intended only to isolate problematic structures and to equip the student with the kind of techniques he needs to tackle professional material in his field of specialization. Such a course is highly selective; commands, requests, and colloquialisms have almost no place here, as they are not likely to occur in the kind of reading material that the student will meet. Nor is there any need to dwell on the difference between the present simple and the present continuous or on constructions using *although* and *in spite of*. A sentence in which any of these forms appears is not likely to be misunderstood. Instead, the emphasis is placed on those aspects of grammar where incomplete understanding will lead to a confused interpretation of the writer's message.

What are these aspects? They can be divided roughly into three groups. The first includes all the constructions that are potential troublemakers for any learner of English as a foreign language, such as word order, adverbs used attributively, conditionals, gerunds and participles, and noun clauses in NP-subject position. The second group includes constructions that have no equivalent in the students' native language. In Israel, for example, the sentences *I had to kill him* and *I should have killed him* are rendered in Hebrew in the same way. Similarly, Hebrew makes no distinction between the present and past conditionals but only between the real and the unreal condition. Time, where necessary, is indicated by an appropriate adverbial. The third group comprises complex sentences. Without the ability to isolate the different parts of the sentence into meaningful units even a good advanced learner may have great difficulty in extracting meaning from a long, complex sentence.

The worksheet technique

Whatever the potential problem, the teaching technique that I suggest here is essentially the same. It consists of the preparation of a series of worksheets containing exercises to test the student's grasp of specific grammatical points as they influence his comprehension of the sentences in which they occur. The worksheets are not intended as drills; they are meant only to expose weaknesses and to give the instructor an opportunity to clarify points that are problematic before the student meets them in a text. The sheets are distributed one at a time to the students, who are given about fifteen minutes to complete the exercises. The papers are not collected and there are no grades, so class tension is kept as low as possible. Students are then invited to give their answers, and, where necessary, a detailed explanation of the relevant point is then offered.

It should be stressed again that we are not speaking of mistakes resulting from non-understanding but of the confusion that arises from misunderstanding—the confusion that is generated when a student arrives at an interpretation based on a false analogy or a careless reading of a sentence or from the inability to separate the sentence into meaningful parts. If one part of a sentence is misunderstood, the other elements do not fit into place. The result is confusion and despair. Our students, for example, often understand *must not* as *need not*, expecting the negative of *must* to create a contradiction of the indicative sentence. They read carelessly and understand *an extensively pest-infected area* as *an extensive pest-infected area*. They understand some of the words in the sentence *Your obligation to the man who befriended you takes precedence over all other considerations* and connect them together to make some kind of meaning. When asked for the main idea, they answer *You are obliged to the man who became your friend*. It is to prevent this type of fuzzy understanding that the short, introductory lessons we suggest here are directed.

The content of the worksheets

The compilation of the worksheets can be altered according to the level and needs of the students. From his own experience in the classroom and familiarity with the native language, the instructor knows which structures are likely to be problematic. For students with a low-intermediate level of English it is useful to start with a worksheet containing a cloze-type test in which only adjectives or only nouns have been omitted, to see if the students can recognize different word classes. Subsequent worksheets can then be compiled to test the students' grasp of verb forms, word order, conditionals, active and passive voice, gerunds and participles, adverbial clauses, and so on. In each case, because we are interested in an understanding of the grammar for purposes of comprehension, the usual type of language drill is of no value. For example, when students learn the active and passive transformations, they are usually given drills in which they transform active verbs to the passive or vice versa, with and without clearly designated agents. In the type of exercise we suggest, the student is given two similar sentences, one containing a verb in the active voice, the other containing a verb in the passive voice. He is asked questions that test his ability to recognize the agent and to make inferences accordingly. Two examples of the kind of questions we suggest follow:

Read the following two sentences carefully, then answer the questions which follow.

A. After John had taken the man to the hospital, he felt tired but relieved.

B. After John had been taken to the hospital, he felt tired but relieved.

Who was taken to the hospital?

A. B.

Why did John feel relieved?

A. B.

A. When the politician asked for a contribution to party funds, he was met by cries of abuse.

B. When the politician was asked for a contribution to party funds, he reacted with cries of abuse.

Who was asked for a contribution to party funds?

A. B.

Who reacted with cries of abuse?

A. B.

Similarly, the kind of grammar drill for the teaching of conditional sentences in which the student is asked to complete the correct form of the verb in the conditional or the main clause or both is of no value to us. Instead, we give a sentence and test the student's understanding of its content, either with a multiple-choice question or with a set of short-answer questions. Two examples follow:

Read the following sentences, then answer the questions that follow.

A. If it were earlier, we could go to a film.

According to this sentence,

a. there is still a possibility that we can be early for the film.

b. it is too late to go to a film.

c. it is too early to go to a film.

d. we can go to a film, but only under certain conditions.

B. If the student had worked hard, he would have passed the examination.

Did the student work hard?

Did the student pass the examination?

Is it possible now for the student to pass the examination?

To test the students' grasp of many different grammatical points as they affect comprehension, it is often sufficient to make up a worksheet containing an assortment of questions, each one focusing on a different point. Weaknesses can thus quickly be exposed. The quick transition from one point to another or even from one type of question to another is not a disadvantage. For this set of lessons to be successful, the material must be demanding, varied, and stimulating. Students usually respond very well. They enjoy the mental exercise in moving from one point to another, and if they err, they are eager to learn where they went wrong.

Other useful worksheets

Another excellent worksheet intended to deal with the kinds of points we have just mentioned, either as reinforcement or as a substitute, is based on possible semantic confusers. This type of exercise is particularly useful for constructions that have no equivalent in the native language. The student is given sets of similar sentences and asked to translate them into the native language or to explain the difference between the sentences in English. As will be seen from the examples that follow, the possibilities are endless. One can start with sentences to test the student's grasp of word order and end with classic examples taken from prominent linguists, to get a measure of the students' intuition of the deep structure of the language. I offer here some examples—though the first sets may be unnecessary for a good class while the last examples may be too difficult for a weak group.

Translate into your native language or explain in English the difference between the sentences in each of the following pairs.

He works in a market town.
He works in a town market.

He is an only child.
He is only a child.

Happily, she is married.
She is happily married.

He did the work, honestly.
He did the work honestly.

I had to marry Joan.
I should have married Joan.

The students who play on the football team leave early.
The students, who play on the football team, leave early.

John plays tennis as well as his father.
John, as well as his father, plays tennis.

If he comes, he brings his dog.
If he comes, he will bring his dog.

He bought a large handwritten book.
He bought a largely handwritten book.

I saw a venetian blind.
I saw a blind Venetian.

I'll read the book tomorrow.
I'll have read the book tomorrow.

Walking on the beach, he saw a beautiful girl.
He saw a beautiful girl walking on the beach.

You should not go to town today.
You must not go to town today.

The baby is too young to sit.
The baby is too young to hold.

John asked his wife to be good.
John promised his wife to be good.

Another method of dealing with the same material is to give the students two sentences with similar surface structures and then ask comprehension questions to see if the students can distinguish between them. Two examples follow.

Read the following two sentences carefully, then answer the questions.

A. I had to marry Joan.
B. I should have married Joan.

Did the speaker marry Joan? A. B.

A. John asked his wife to be good.
B. John promised his wife to be good.

Who is expected to be good? A. B.

When all the potentially confusing grammatical points have been covered, it is time to deal with the analysis into units of complex sentences. Before distributing any worksheets, it is worthwhile spending some time to sharpen the students' knowledge of word markers. Students should be asked how they can recognize a verb, a noun, an adverb, a prepositional phrase, a subordinate clause. With the aid of student answers a list of markers can be drawn up. Where necessary, the instructor should be ready to give examples of the kind of mistakes in comprehension that could occur when the student ignores the markers. The list, when completed, should look something like this:

NOUN MARKERS: *a, the, some, this, a few, three, my,* etc.

ADJECTIVE MARKERS: adjective endings (*-al,-y, -ant, -ive*, etc.), position in the sentence (after a noun marker, before a noun, after a linking verb)

VERB MARKERS: forms of the verb *to be*, *to have*, *to do*, modals, position in the sentence (after NP)

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE MARKERS: *in, out, over, through, below*, etc.

PUNCTUATION MARKERS: commas, quotation marks, italics, semicolons, etc.

Dealing with noun clauses

The students are now ready for a worksheet testing their ability to recognize subordinate clauses and noun clauses. They are given a number of sentences each of which contains one kind of clause, and asked to underline the main verb in each sentence. Their success (or failure) to do so will indicate to the instructor whether or not they have grasped the structure of the sentence. It will be found that neither adjectival clauses nor adverbial clauses present much of a problem; one or two examples of each is sufficient. Noun clauses are a source of confusion. It is surprising how many students get bogged down in what they later see to be a very simple sentence. Here is an example of the kind of worksheet that is suitable:

Underline the main verb in each of the following sentences.

How the book will sell depends on the publicity.

All I did was ask the time.

He regretted that he had asked such a stupid question.

Your obligation to the man who befriended you takes precedence over all other considerations.

What she does is not my affair.

Unless the strike ends, we will have no bread tomorrow.

I don't agree with his opinion that there is no advantage in learning English.

To have two bowls of rice in a society where the majority have only half a bowl is a sign of achievement.

Whether one is a grade school dropout or a university graduate determines one's status in certain societies.

In the discussion that follows the students' answers, it is recommended that the sentences be diagrammed so that the students can learn to see the noun clause as one unit, replaceable by a noun (*something*) or a pronoun (*it*). For example, in the sentence we quoted earlier, *How the book will sell depends on the publicity*, it is useful to diagram it thus:

$\boxed{\text{Something}}$ depends on the publicity.

The essential meaning of the sentence is thus made clear. The student can now be taught to work on the noun clause to answer the question *What depends on the publicity?* Similarly, the sentence *I know what he wants to say* can be diagrammed:

I know $\boxed{\text{something.}}$

At a second stage, the words that form the utterance which substitutes for *something* in the original sentence can be interpreted.

Where an adjectival clause is part of the subject—that is, an embedded sentence dominated by the NP-subject node, to use the transformational-grammar terminology—students should be directed to see all the elements dominated by the NP-subject node as one unit and then later to separate them. Thus, in the sentence we referred to earlier, *Your obligation to the man who saved your life takes precedence over all other considerations*, the sentence can be broken up as follows:

Stage 1. $\boxed{\text{This}}$ takes precedence over all other considerations.

Stage 2. Your obligation to the man $\boxed{}$ takes precedence over all other considerations.

The embedded sentence *The man befriended you* can be understood later and then fitted into the students' interpretation of the matrix sentence, when the order of the units is clearly appreciated.

continued on page 32

The Check Procedure in a Technical English Training Course

EDWARD I. BURKART
English Language Institute
The American University

Edward I. Burkart is associate professor in the English Language Institute, The American University, Washington, D.C., where he teaches in the M.A. program in linguistics. This article is an outgrowth of two technical English materials preparation projects in which he participated. The texts that resulted from these projects are currently in use in the Middle East.

A growing area of concern in the ESOL field is the teaching of technical English to potential operators of sophisticated mechanical and electronic equipment. Because of differences in cultural and educational traditions as well as language, the students need to be trained not only in vocabulary and specialized structures appropriate to their eventual technical area, but also in various concepts which underlie the operation of the equipment and, in a very superficial sense, its construction.

Before entering technical English training, the students should have completed an intensive course in general English structure and vocabulary usage. This provides a foundation on which to build. After completing their technical English course, they should then proceed into their substantive operator training. The technical English course thus is an important transition program which helps the students to prepare to understand the equipment manuals and to communicate with English-speaking instructors during their operator training.

The operation of sophisticated mechanical and electronic equipment almost always requires the following of detailed check procedures. Examples of such procedures are the various step-by-step lists of instructions which must be run through in order to operate a complex aircraft (such as an airliner) and the daily checks used to determine the readiness and functional integrity of a radar set. Such check procedures invariably include specialized vocabulary, structures, and concepts. Examples of vocabulary (for an aircraft) include *flaps*, *landing gear*, and *cabin pressure*; examples of structures include *press test lamp* and *cycle propeller high-low-high*. Examples of concepts are the difference between turning a crank clockwise and counter clockwise, and the cause/effect relationship between engaging the starter and the cranking of the engine which results. In fact, the act of following a check procedure itself is a concept foreign to many students, representing as it does technology common to various Western cultures but unfamiliar to a desert-dwelling Arab, say, or an Iranian villager. And it is from such traditional segments of a society that potential operator trainees are often drawn. Learning to work with check procedures, then, becomes an important goal in the technical English training of potential equipment operators.

What is a check procedure?

Before discussing the role of the check procedure in a technical English course, it is worth taking a few moments to discuss the nature of the check procedure, and to look at some examples. As stated above, a check procedure is a step-by-step list of instructions. These instructions must be followed systematically in order to accomplish a specific task. It is usually necessary that the instructions be followed *in the order given* and that no instruction be ignored.

Check procedures vary widely in format and in degree of formality. An example of an informal check procedure, which because of its informality requires considerable familiarity with the equipment, is the following (which may be used to start the engine of one kind of light aircraft):

Check Procedure I

Carburetor Heat—COLD
Mixture—RICH
Propeller—HI RPM
Throttle—CRACKED
Prime—AS NEEDED
Master Switch—ON
Propeller Area—CLEAR
Starter—ENGAGE
Oil Pressure—CHECK

Omitting certain of these instructions (for example, *Master Switch—ON*, which makes available the electrical power to operate the starter) may result in the engine not starting. Similarly, taking certain instructions out of sequence (for example, sequencing *[Fuel] Mixture—RICH* after *Starter—ENGAGE*) may give the same result. Further, the reader who is not a pilot will note that certain vocabulary, structures, and concepts need explanation. Since this is true even if the reader is a native speaker of English, the extent of the problem for nonnative speakers can readily be imagined.

More formalized check procedures must often be used where the equipment is more complex. Consider the following check procedure, which might be part of the daily check for a hypothetical piece of electronic equipment:

Check Procedure II

Location	Action	Indication
At Control Panel I	1. Main Circuit Breaker (1, Fig. 1)	ON
	2. Console Power Switch (6, Fig. 1)	ON
	3. Lamp Dimmer Control (3, Fig. 1)	Fully CW
	4. Depress High Voltage Warning Lamp (5, Fig. 1)	Lamp Illuminates
	5. Set Test Switch (2, Fig. 1) to	ZERO Test Lamp (4, Fig. 1) Illuminates

Again, all instructions must be followed in the order indicated. Note the column headings (Location, Action, Indication) and the detailed nature of some of the instructions. The numbers in parentheses refer to corresponding numbers on a specific illustration (line drawing or photo) in the equipment operator's manual. Such numbers are often referred to as "callout numbers."

As in the case of *Check Procedure I*, vocabulary (including here an abbreviation), structures, and concepts need explanation. Note also that the column headings do not always describe explicitly the information found below them: *Main Circuit Breaker*, for example, in Instruction 1, is not an action but the name of a part of the equipment. Vagueness and lack of consistency in language usage are not uncommon in published check procedures. Nevertheless, because the instructions tend to be more detailed, such procedures are easier to follow (assuming the operator has the appropriate illustration in the manual to refer to).

The check procedure as part of a technical English course

Reading and following check procedures is an important part of the daily routine of an operator of sophisticated equipment. Since many of his problems in this regard relate directly to language usage and extremely basic technological concepts, it is desirable that the basic skills of how to read and follow such procedures be taught to the trainee prior to the time he enters into substantive operator training. Perhaps the best way to do this is to include check procedures in a technical English course.

Let's assume an intensive six- or seven-hour-per-day, five-day-per-week technical English course, taught to a group of students all of whom come from the same language (and roughly the same cultural) background, and all of whom will enter operator training after they finish their technical English study. They are entering technical English training after successfully completing an intensive general English course, which has given them a fairly good knowledge of basic English vocabulary and structures.

The technical English course could include one or two check procedures as part of each day's lesson material—analogous in part to the dialogues often used in other English courses. During the first week or so of the course these procedures should be *simple*, and specially written to make use of objects found in the classroom or in the possession of the students. The following check procedure, which makes use of a pencil sharpener, will serve as an example:

Check Procedure III

Location	Action	Indication
At the Pencil Sharpener	1. Examine pencil to determine end to be sharpened	End determined
	2. Insert pencil into sharpener	Pencil inserted
	3. Apply slight pressure inward	Pressure applied
	4. Turn handle of sharpener clockwise	Pencil sharpens

Such check procedures should be kept as simple as possible, as their primary function is to teach the basic concept of a check procedure. Note that specific technical vocabulary, structures, and concepts can be used, as they are to some extent in this procedure. However, the teaching of such usage is secondary to the teaching of the basic concept at this very early stage in the course.

As the course progresses further, check procedures should be excerpted from equipment manuals, preferably the operator manuals that the students will use in their operator training course. These check-procedure excerpts can be chosen and sequenced so as to present fairly systematically, from the easier to the more difficult, actual vocabulary, structures, and concepts that the students will need to know during their later training. For example, one procedure might consist of instructions to *depress* a series of *lamps* (press a series of buttons containing light bulbs), while observing to see whether each lamp illuminates when depressed. Such a procedure would teach *lamp*, the names of the lamps (as labeled on the control panel), the verbs *depress* and *illuminate*, the structure *Depress + Noun Phrase*, and the cause/effect relationship between depressing a lamp and its consequent illumination.

A problem that will be uncovered when excerpting check procedures from equipment manuals involves various types of inconsistency and vagueness, such as appear in *Check Procedure II*, above. Weaknesses of this kind in a check procedure are particularly annoying to an English teacher, who feels an instinctive need to correct the English. Yet to do so would not be entirely fair to the students, who after all will have to work with the manuals as they are printed, once the technical English course is over. Perhaps the best way to handle this situation is to present the first few equipment-manual check procedures in two forms: the first edited, and the second as the procedure actually appears in the manual. This will help wean the students from the controlled usage of the English classroom to the less controlled usage of operator manuals and technical instructors.

Teaching a check procedure

Once the decision is made to include check procedures in a technical English course, it is necessary to consider how they should be taught. Perhaps the major problems that come to mind are the following: (1) The average English teacher is not qualified in the particular technical area to which the procedures relate. (2) A check procedure written on a piece of paper is really quite abstract, and experience has shown that the average non-Western operator trainee has trouble coping with technological abstractions of any sort. (3) Specific instructional routines need to be evolved to teach the procedures.

1. *The English Teacher*. Let's consider the teacher first. In order for any teacher to teach check procedures, it is essential that he familiarize himself in general with the equipment, the relationship of the check procedures to that equipment, and to a limited extent the overall technical field. At the minimum, he should have available a set of the equipment manuals from which the check procedures have been excerpted, and he should be strongly encouraged to study them. It is extremely helpful also if one of the technical instructors who will teach the students later in their operator course can be available to answer questions, and perhaps give one or more talks about the general nature of the equipment and its function. The task of orienting the teacher is not as formidable as it may seem, however (assuming the students have no previous knowledge about the equipment). The teachers' goal will not be to teach the students how the equipment functions, but to prepare them to receive training from technically qualified instructors in how to operate the equipment. Thus, for example, a student does not need to be taught the function of the *High Voltage Warning Lamp* on a control panel, but simply how to locate and identify that component on the panel and, in a general sense, how to depress a lamp and observe the result.

2. *The Abstractness of the Check Procedure*. This problem is best solved by a combination of training aids and instructional routines using those aids. The earliest check procedures in the course should relate directly to objects physically present in the classroom (light switch, doorknob, pencil sharpener, furniture, etc.). Abstraction is not a significant problem here, as the student can see, touch, and manipulate the objects as required by the check procedures, and observe the result of each step directly rather than having to imagine it. This allows him to focus on the concept of the check procedure itself, with a minimum of interference from other problem areas.

The procedures taken from the equipment manuals, on the other hand, pose more of a problem. Let's assume that the equipment check procedures in the course relate directly to a number of control panels, each one equipped with an array of switches, buttons, meters, circuit breakers, handwheels and other components. What is required here are visual aids. Experience has shown the following to be a good combination:

a. An illustration in the text to accompany each check procedure. This should be either a line drawing or a photo of the actual control panel, reproduced so that the labels of the switches, meters, etc., are clearly legible. Photos are preferable to drawings, because they are less abstract. Each component on the illustration should be identified by a number (a so-called *callout number*), with the numbers used in the check procedure corresponding to some of the numbers in the illustration. Sometimes an illustration from the equipment manual can be reproduced for this purpose.

b. A transparency for an overhead projector duplicating the illustration in the text, including callout numbers.

c. A transparency for an overhead projector depicting the same control panel, but without the callout numbers. In both transparencies the labels of the components on the control panel must be clearly legible when projected on a screen.

d. If feasible (but not absolutely necessary), one or more mock-up control panels. These should depict the panel(s) that relate to the last few check procedures used in the course. A mock-up can be made by mounting an enlarged photo (life-size, preferably) of a panel on plywood or some similar material about one-half inch thick. If possible, holes should be drilled, and actual components (spare parts from the equipment) attached. Only those manipulable components (switches, etc.) used in the excerpted check procedures need be provided.

3. *Instructional Routines*. The following routines can be taken as a starting point. Experience has shown that they are generally adequate for a course such as is discussed here. Modifications may have to be made, of course, because of limitations in classroom time, lack of some of the visual aids, or the peculiarities of the individual class of students.

INTRODUCTION OF A CHECK PROCEDURE

1. *Pronunciation Model*. The teacher reads the check procedure aloud; the students follow in their books silently.

2. *Performance Model*. The teacher projects a transparency on the screen, choosing the transparency for the correct panel which includes the callout numbers. He then stands beside the projected image and reads the check procedure aloud, identifying each component and simulating the performance of the instructions. For example, if an instruction reads:

Lamp Dimmer Control (3, Fig. 1)	Fully CW

the teacher locates callout number 3 on the projected image, uses the number to locate and identify the Lamp Dimmer Control, and simulates turning the control clockwise (CW).

3. *Explanation of New Vocabulary, Structures, and Basic Technological Concepts*. Using the projection, the teacher explains the new items and concepts. The students should be encouraged to ask questions at this time, but the teacher should not try to give involved explanations which lead beyond his level of competence. The students will receive advanced technical information about the equipment later, during their operator training.

4. *Choral Repetition of New or Difficult Words and Phrases*. Double repetition.

5. *Performance Practice*. The teacher asks two students to stand in front of the class, beside the projected image. One student reads the check procedure, instruction by instruction, while the other student simulates the actions on the projected image. The student simulating the actions may also use his book, if necessary.

6. *Repeating of Step 5 until Time Runs Out*. After several students have performed the check procedure, the teacher can try using the transparency of the same panel without callout number. Ideally, each student should perform each check procedure twice: once as reader and once as actor.

REVIEW OF A CHECK PROCEDURE

1. *Performance Model*. The teacher projects the transparency of the panel with callout numbers. The students have their books open to the illustration of the panel. The teacher reads through the check procedure, simulating the actions on the projected image.

2. *Asking for and Answering Questions on Vocabulary, Structures, and Basic Technological Concepts*. The teacher should use the projected image as needed, being careful to avoid overly involved explanations.

3. *Choral Repetition of Difficult Words and Phrases*. Double repetition.

4. *Identification of Equipment and Parts*. The teacher exchanges the transparency for its counterpart without the callout numbers. He then asks the students to identify the panel and the major components used in the check procedure.

5. *Performance Practice*. Using the transparency from the previous step, or the mock-up console if available, the teacher asks two students to simulate performance of the check procedure. One student reads and the other acts out the instructions. Only the reader should have a book, and of course there are no callout numbers to aid the actor.

6. *Repeating of Step 5 until Time Runs Out*. If time permits, each student should perform the check procedure twice: once as reader and once as actor.

Teaching Grammar continued from page 28

The final worksheet

The student should now be given the last worksheet, which contains many complex sentences with as many unfamiliar words as possible. He should be asked to extract the meaning of the sentences by dealing with the elements in the following order:

1. Isolate the main clause.

2. Isolate the main verb. Find its meaning in the dictionary. This will give expectations as to the nature of the subject (animate, inanimate) and, possibly, as to the content of the sentence.

3. Isolate the nouns in the main clause. Nouns, verbs, and prepositions should give a skeleton of meaning.

4. Add adjectives and adverbs. The main clause should now be clear.

5. Follow the same strategy with each subordinate clause, dealing first with adverbial, then with adjectival clauses.

The student is now ready to begin reading advanced texts. The course I have outlined here takes approximately ten hours. It is time well spent. The teacher is saved the necessity for many explanations and digressions at a later stage when the texts are being covered, while the student, for his part, is saved much frustration. This is not the place to deal with the psychological barrier that prevents many foreign learners of English from attempting to read a difficult text—or even any page whatsoever of printed English. Suffice it to say here that any teacher of English at this level will testify to its existence. It is my experience that this barrier is penetrated much more quickly when students come to their texts after an introductory set of lessons of the kind I have described.

Some Ideas for More Effective Teaching

Ho Shue-Hsing
Provincial Taoyuan
Senior High School
Taiwan

Ho Shue-Hsing teaches English at the Provincial Taoyuan Senior High School in Taiwan, where he has taught during his entire teaching career "without a single year's interruption." Such a circumstance, he says, has afforded him a stable and peaceful life, giving him time to read books, including "several dozen English classics, several dozen modern English best sellers, a number of English versions of Chinese classics and ancient novels, and lots of American Western legends" (perhaps several hundred of these), as well as books on psychology, linguistics, and language philosophy.

Eighteen years ago I began my teaching life, and during all these years the thought that has most occupied my mind is how I could make my teaching more effective. Now I feel that I have something to say about the English-teaching work that may be helpful to other teachers in situations similar to my own. The following points, which have grown out of my experience and thought, relate to the work of the teacher and of the students.

GUIDANCE FOR THE TEACHERS

Provide circumstances that will arouse interest in learning. By *circumstances* I mean primarily two things: (1) an English-speaking environment in which students can hear and practice freely; (2) a pleasant atmosphere, which will make students more willing to learn on their own volition.

A circumstance that we can all make use of is the readings in a textbook. These usually present a clearly written story in which the reader can understand the words more thoroughly and penetratingly than in an isolated sentence. Learning a word from a word list is not so useful as learning it in a sentence, and the most efficient way to learn a word or phrase is in the complete context of a smoothly written story. It is a pity that the prevalent way of teaching English here is to use as teaching material a book full of isolated sentences, to call such a book a grammar, and to assume that this "grammar" is a cure-all for whatever is lacking in the student's knowledge of English.

Grammar should not be confused with vocabulary learning. Those who fail to learn English, and even those who are responsible for education, often ascribe the students' failure to their neglect of grammar study. But grammar is only a tool for learning English at the first stage. The purpose of teaching grammar is to pave the way for the students to understand what they are taught; after they gain such understanding, they should further their study in other ways. I advocate that "grammar teaching" should be limited to language structures and that vocabulary building should be left to extensive reading. If we mix the teaching of word meanings with grammar, we shall probably befuddle the students, who will make mistakes from their lack of knowledge of the whole picture.

Speak in English as much as possible in class. In order to improve students' hearing and speaking abilities as well as to increase their interest in learning, the teacher should avail himself of every chance to speak in English instead of the native tongue. It requires special care and skill to make your use of English in the classroom as efficient as possible. The speed with which you speak should be suited to the students' proficiency in English, so that they can easily understand you and enjoy your teaching. Also, the vocabulary you use should be carefully chosen so that most of the students can understand, or at least catch the main idea of, what you say. You may sometimes have to repeat or interpret what you have said, using simpler expressions. If you are teaching students at a low level of achievement in English, you had better give a hint in the students' native language before or after your English utterance. To use this method, the teacher himself has to have rather good proficiency in oral English, or else carefully prepare himself for situations that may occur, in order to avoid appearing awkward in front of his students.

Take every opportunity to make students active in learning. A famous saying in education is "learn by doing." The great sage Confucius tells us that if a student couldn't respond with the three corners after the first one had been taught, he would cease teaching that student. Merely listening, or taking in what the teacher teaches, is a far from adequate way for a student to learn; he must also use his mind and hand. All that a teacher can do is to provide guidance for his students. Just as meat, vegetables, and spices can't become delicious food without skillful cooking by a capable chef, so a teacher's task is to provide adequate material, but the cooking should be left to the students themselves. A good teacher should not try to do the learning work for his students. Mr. Tsao, a former principal of the school in which I teach, said on many occasions that the good teachers are those who make their students busy while they themselves have little to do. At first I didn't fully understand his meaning. But almost two decades of teaching experience have shown me that Mr. Tsao's remark is worth valuing. As a teacher there are two things you should try hard to do: (1) get your students to study on their own initiative, and (2) get them to use their hands and mind cheerfully through the entire course of learning. When you are giving an explanation to your class, you might pause from time to time to give them an opportunity to digest what you are saying. If during a course of study problems arise that need to be solved or require special emphasis, you should give the students time to work on them. When the situation requires and time allows, you might call on several students to go to the blackboard and demonstrate something before the whole class. Motion of both mind and body are necessary for efficient learning. We teachers should take advantage of every opportunity to make our students active. Doing work that belongs to our students is an unpardonable mistake.

A linear principle for English learning: U, R, M. The letters *U, R, M* stand, respectively, for UNDERSTAND, READ, and MUCH. Whenever you undertake to learn something, your first step should be to understand it, including both grammatical structure and the meaning of the words involved. Understanding the material not only gives students motivation to study but also strengthens their memory.

After they have gained understanding, intense reading and oral and written practice are necessary to enhance their learning. When a teacher teaches something, the student may feel that he has understood it. But if he tries to repeat the lesson after school, he usually finds that he doesn't really understand it until he has repeated it six or more times. Therefore the student should continue to read the material until he has digested it and is able to use it. This is the most important step in the U-R-M method.

The final step of the method is "much," which means going on reading more and more articles. Thus the student will consolidate his vocabulary. Without the last step his learning will fall just short of success. To first "understand," then "read" and practice, and finally do "much" pave a broad highway leading to the student's proficiency in English. Of course, this way takes much hard work and time. But the student should keep in mind that knowledge—any kind of knowledge—is never gained easily; easily gained knowledge is not real knowledge.

Further study is the best review. English is not like history or geography. When you are preparing for an examination in one of these latter subjects, it is necessary to review facts that may have been learned a year or two ago. But this is not the case with English, in which further study will provide you with what you need to know. If you review too much and do little new studying, the words, which you still know unclearly, will not do you much good when you try to use them. Clarity for a word of complicated meaning cannot be gained only by repeating; in most cases further reading does the work, and thus is the best review.

GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS

In order to make our teaching more effective, several points of guidance should be directed to students:

How to Use a Dictionary. The average high school student uses a pocket-type dictionary, which gives only a simple corresponding meaning in the student's native tongue for the English word. This is far from adequate for a student who wants to gain a true understanding of English and to progress. A medium-sized dictionary should be recommended for high school students. As teachers our task is to teach the student how to choose a suitable definition for a word he wants to know, how to find a phrase or idiom containing a certain word, and how to find an example showing how a word is used. If your students are good enough to try to use an English-English dictionary, you should unhesitatingly encourage them to do so, giving guidance if necessary. Very often an English-English dictionary can do what a bilingual one can't; moreover, it is a short-cut way to learn a language. I always say that using English to explain English can cut the fingernail to the quick. No dictionary is perfect; some are better in certain respects, some in others.[1] Sometimes you can even find contradictory meanings for the same word among various dictionaries. Therefore it may be advisable for students to have access to more than one kind of dictionary.

---

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE: In his article "Which Dictionary is 'Best'?" (ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM, *12*, 4 [October-December 1974]) Richard Yorkey makes an interesting comparison of five major all-English dictionaries.

Repeating a Word in a Phrase. A word often has different meanings in different contexts; if isolated, its meaning may be so ambiguous as to lead one astray. So repeating it by itself will not do the learners much good. I teach students to practice a word in an idiom or together with the word or words before or after it, so they can learn its meaning and usage at the same time; for example, *bowl* in the phrase *a bowl of rice*, *truant* in *play truant*. Practicing words in this way can promote students' interest in learning and make memorizing easy and permanent.

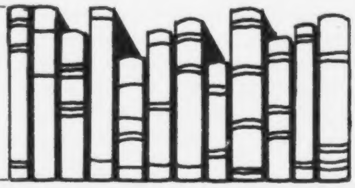
Memorizing by Recall. This method can be used both by the teacher, in classroom instruction, and in self-study by the students. When you teach something that you think deserves special attention, you may let the students raise their eyes from their books temporarily to recite that point; then let them check by looking down at their book again. This not only helps your students memorize their lesson, but also makes your work more interesting.

Introducing Interesting Material for Self-Study. Learning English includes reading, writing, speaking, and hearing. In most schools here reading is central, and the other three skills receive little attention on the part of students or teachers. However, the balanced force of the four skills plays an essential role in learning a language. Therefore, while placing most of the emphasis in the classroom on reading, I would want to have students spend part of their extracurricular time on the other skills. Simple and interesting modern publications, opportunities for exchanging letters, and occasions for meeting English-speaking people are what I would like to introduce. These activities would be much more useful for the students than books (circulated in the book market) such as *Dictionary for Examination*, *Key for Entrance to a College*, etc., which I believe are harmful to the students.

CONCLUSION

My views about English teaching can be summed up in a few words: I advocate gaining knowledge by effort, by studying step by step; I object to the idea of grammar as a cure-all and to the find-a-key attitude toward learning. Over a period of many years I have become convinced that although the "cure-all" and "key-finding" ideas may be attractive to students and their parents, such trends are inimical to true education and should form no part of it.

Book Notes



A Grammar Review Text

English Structure in Focus *by Polly Davis. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1977. xv + 375 pp., $7.95; teacher's manual, 65 pp., $1.95; answer key $2.25.*

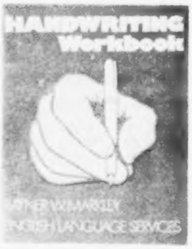
A grammar review with special focus on the verb system and the formation of complex sentences. The fifty-four lessons, built around cultural, historical, or human-interest themes, are designed to stimulate the student's thinking as well as increase his awareness of grammatical patterns and improve his communicative abilities through extensive oral and written exercises. The material could be used as an upper-intermediate-level text for students completing a basic comprehensive beginning course, or as grammar review with items selected according to the students' level and needs. Well indexed.

ENGLISH STRUCTURE in FOCUS
Polly Davis

A Beginner's Handwriting Book

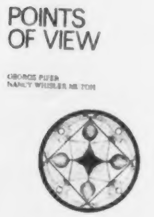
Handwriting Workbook: Handwriting and Letter Recognition Practice for Learners of the English Alphabet *by Rayner W. Markley. Portland, Ore.: English Language Services, 1977. 51 pp., $1.50.*

For secondary-school, university, and adult students who have never studied English or another language in a roman alphabet, this workbook provides practice in forming the cursive (handwritten) letters, placing words in alphabetical order, and recognizing the printed form of the letters. An answer key for some exercises permits independent practice. Although correlated to Willard D. Sheeler's *Welcome to English: Book 1*, this book may also be used separately or with another basic course.



An Advanced Oral-Skills Textbook

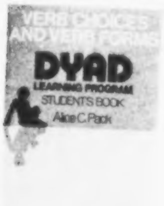
Points of View *by George Pifer and Nancy Whisler Mutoh. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1977. xxi + 129 pp., $3.95.*



A collection of fifteen situations and problems taken from daily life to provide a basis for communication practice for advanced-level university students and adults. The case studies in Part I: Analysis include "getting married," "studying a foreign language," "selecting a job or position in a company," "advanced education," "childhood activities," "deciding where to live," "deciding how to make a purchase." Part II: Problem Solving includes "family togetherness," "what to do about Grandmother," "neighborliness," "getting involved," "a friend in need of help," "watching television," "working wives," "a friend who is a thief." Background details and context purposely omit identification with a specific culture so that students may project their own cultural and individual ideas as they discuss, analyze, and evaluate alternative courses of action called for by the situations. Careful, analytic reading and thinking is required, as well as attentive listening during the paraphrasing, summarizing, exemplifying, debating, and discussion activities. Additional, optional exercises (written and oral) are included in each unit. The illustrations and photos have an international flavor; the material is suitable for advanced conversation classes or groups or as a source of new ideas for language practice and involvement in a regular classroom.

Student-Interaction Review Texts

Dyad Learning Program *by Alice C. Pack. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House 1977.* Prepositions, *vii + 293 pp., $4.95;* Pronouns and Determiners, *vii + 305 pp., $4.95;* Verb Choices and Verb Forms, *v + 345 pp., $5.95.*



The first three in a projected series of innovative textbooks on grammar for upper-intermediate or advanced university or adult students, designed to be used by either a student or the student's tutor. Each book is printed with a "student's" side and a "tutor's" side, which are upside-down to each other. Since the format is simple and the answers given, the tutor may be a learner on the same level as the student he is coaching, or at a more advanced level; thus the text may serve as a review. This "dyad" approach is similar to "pair practice" and provides for learner interaction, immediate feedback, and self-pacing for individual students. The material is appropriate for supplementary or remedial work, focusing on points of grammar easily confused by learners of English. Prefatory notes to the teacher explain the suggested teaching procedures.

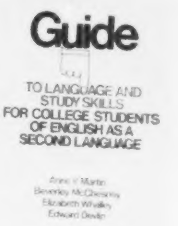
Reading and Writing Workbooks

Foundations for Reading and Writing *by Willard Sheeler and others. Portland, Ore.: English Language Services 1977.* Workbook 1, *113 pp., $1.95;* Workbook 2, *118 pp., $1.95.*

Supplementary workbooks for beginning-level secondary-school and adult students to accompany the *Welcome to English* series by the same author. The material can also be used to supplement other basic courses or as self-pacing workbooks by students on an intermediate level who need review of basic structures; a key to the dictations and exercises appears at the back of each volume. Notes on the rationale and how to use the material are presented in the preface.

A University Study-Skills Handbook

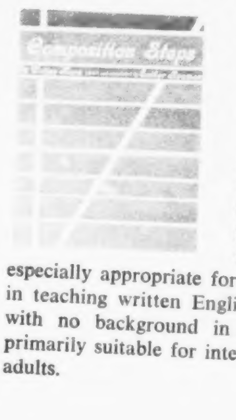
Guide to Language and Study Skills for College Students of English as a Second Language *by Anne V. Martin and others. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977. xii + 276 pp., $6.95.*



A practical handbook for developing the skills requisite for studying in American universities. Chapters discuss and provide practice in structural aids to writing, vocabulary development, frequently used word groups, study techniques, and preparation of academic papers. Two student papers (undergraduate and graduate level) illustrating standard style and format are appended.

A Practical Composition Book

Composition Steps *by Vivian Horn. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1977. vii + 149 pp., $4.50; teacher's manual, 22 pp., $1.95.*



Each of the twenty units in this textbook/workbook focuses on a specific activity designed to develop expository writing skills: copying, identification/recognition, dictation, scrambled paragraphs, grammar, spelling, alphabetizing, oral composition, paragraph completion, forming paragraphs by answering questions, imitating model paragraphs, punctuation, copyreading, word games, following directions, letter-writing, dicto-comps, and free writing. The material is practical rather than academic in orientation and should be especially appropriate for EFL teachers who are inexperienced in teaching written English, also for more advanced students with no background in practical writing in English. It is primarily suitable for intermediate-level university students and adults.

FORUM NEWS & IDEAS

CANADA

A Communicative Approach to Teaching the Simple Present and the Present Progressive

ALEX SHARMA
Concordia University

Students learn best when the material to be learned has particular relevance to their needs and interests. If the goal of language instruction is to equip students for effective communication in real situations, then part of the instruction must include these communicative situations in simulated or duplicated form. Only then can students effectively realize their linguistic competence. One of these communicative situations, particularly relevant to young learners, involves sports, where one is either in the role of player/participant or spectator/commentator. Exploiting this interest for teaching functional grammar can be a great addition to the teacher's repertoire, particularly when active learning is best encouraged by activity itself.

The usual approach

Most classroom presentations of the simple present and the present progressive involve a contrast using adverbial cues. The simple present form is introduced as the "habitual" present: *John eats lunch at 12 noon EVERY DAY*. The present progressive is introduced as the "limited duration" present (Quirk and Greenbaum 1973): *John is eating lunch NOW*.

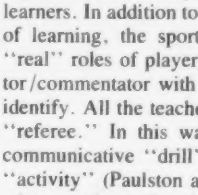
To elicit these structures, questions such as *What does John do at 12:00 noon every day?* and *What is John doing now?* are used as stimuli in meaningful drills, following the presentation of the structures in context (Paulston and Bruder 1976). Teachers extend this practice with the use of visual aids, which, quite apart from the limitations of their two-dimensional nature, are hardly effective materials for helping students acquire the concept of an *action in progress* (the essence of the "progressive" aspect). When learning activities stop at this stage, there is no reason to expect the transfer of function and form of the structures to real communicative situations. Furthermore, this approach will do nothing to solve the persistent problems of the omission of the third person singular *-s* inflection in the production of the simple present structure and the omission of the auxiliary *be* in the present progressive structure.

A real activity

One way to encourage the realization of linguistic competence in a real communicative situation is to provide an activity for the classroom that resembles the communicative situation as much as possible and is relevant to the needs and interests of the learners. Sports is certainly one of the real activities that can be exploited in this way, particularly for young learners. In addition to being an enjoyable way of learning, the sports activity provides the "real" roles of player/participant and spectator/commentator with which the students can identify. All the teacher needs to do is to play "referee." In this way, elements of both a communicative "drill" and a communicative "activity" (Paulston and Bruder) can be added to mechanical and meaningful drills. The activity exploits what some grammarians refer to as the "instantaneous"/"temporary"/"limited duration" functions of the present system (Hirtle 1967; Quirk and Greenbaum 1973). Any sports fan who listens to commentaries will recognize the use of the simple present when the action moves fast.

To take an example from the world's most popular sport and the fastest growing game in the United States—soccer (football): "Beckenbauer *passes* the ball to Pele, Pele *passes* it back to Beckenbauer, Beckenbauer *gives* it to Chinaglia, Chinaglia *tries* to score. He *scores*!" When the action slows down, thus emphasizing the "duration" aspect, the commentary changes to the present progressive forms: "Beckenbauer *is passing* the ball to Pele. Pele *is passing* it back to Beckenbauer. Beckenbauer *is giving* it to Chinaglia. Chinaglia *is trying* to score. He scores!" Notice that the verbs that can be used include both the "dynamic" kind, that is, the "action" verbs that can take the progressive aspect (*pass*, *give*, etc.), and the "stative" kind that cannot occur in the progressive: "Now Chinaglia has the ball."

Alex Sharma teaches in the TESL Centre at Concordia University, Montreal. He has been involved in teacher training in English as a foreign or second language in the United States and Canada, and has also taught English as a foreign or second language or second dialect, as well as French as a foreign language, at the secondary and university levels. Mr. Sharma has given workshops and seminars for teachers in Canada and the United States and has published articles in two of his major interest areas: error analysis and teaching techniques.



How can this communicative event be brought into the classroom for learning?

Conducting the practice

A tennis ball could be all the "sports equipment" the teacher needs. Since few teachers would justify the kicking around of a tennis ball in the classroom, I would suggest that the classroom activity should resemble a sport such as basketball, where the ball is passed by hand from player to player. Depending on how the seating is arranged in the classroom, one side/row of the class could be the players and the other, the spectators or commentators. The teacher/referee can control the game/language practice by giving verb cues (*pass*, etc.) to the players and structural meaning cues (*fast*, *slow*) to the commentators.

Sides/rows alternate when the last member of the players' side "tries" to score and either "scores" or "misses." The "goal" could be a box or wastebasket. Points can be awarded to the players for scoring and to the commentators for each correct structure used—form as well as function. The game can begin and progress by having the teacher/referee call on certain students on both sides or by simply allowing both the play and commentary to go from first to last player down each row. Those who elect to play "spectator" should be encouraged to react with the normal praise and criticism ("Good shot, Mario!," "Take him out of the game," etc.). Students should get a chance to play all roles of this event, including that of referee.

Other uses

In addition to being an enjoyable approach to learning the form and function of the simple present and present progressive structures, this activity also lends itself to communicative practice of the indirect object structure (since many of the verbs used will take the indirect object) and of the simple past in "end-of-play" summaries: "Mario first *passed* the ball to Kim, then Kim *passed* the ball back to Mario. Mario next *gave* the ball to Ahmed. And Ahmed *scored!*"

REFERENCES

Hirtle, W. H. 1967. *The simple and progressive forms: an analytical approach*. Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval.

Leech, Geoffrey. 1971. *Meaning and the English verb*. London: Longman Group Ltd.

Leech, Geoffrey and Jan Svartvik. 1975. *A communicative grammar of English*. London: Longman Group Ltd.

Paulston, Christina Bratt and Mary Newton Bruder. 1976. *Teaching English as a second language: techniques and procedures*. Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc.

Quirk, Randolph and Sidney Greenbaum. 1973. *A university grammar of English*. London: Longman Group Ltd.

IRAN

The Relative Clause as a Creative Tool in Introductory Composition

SANDRA SCHNELL-DOUBLEDAY
Jundi Shapur University

The students entering the English department at Jundi Shapur University have learned, through prior instruction in English, some vocabulary and a certain amount of English grammar. But they have trouble writing grammatical sentences, and their vocabulary and sentence structure are at a childish level. Their inability to communicate on an adult level in their second language frustrates them.

As one way of dealing with this frustration, as well as to teach and review grammatical structures, I have for two years experimented with a relative-clause project at approximately the mid-year point in my introductory composition classes. At this point in the program the students have become familiar with the basic grammar required for the construction of the relative clause: pronouns, articles, habitual tense, present tense, past tense, and modals.

Why the relative clause?

The relative clause is an indispensable structure in advanced creative or expository writing. Native writers use it freely in describing persons and objects, in defining objects and abstractions, and in explaining spatial order. The foreign speaker or writer tends to use the relative clause either sparingly because he fears it is too complex or incorrectly because he has not mastered its construction. Both of these difficulties can be ameliorated through a program that provides thorough instruction and practice in the use of this structure.

A relative-clause project also provides a creative and useful tool for the review of previously taught verb tenses and articles, the enlargement of "content" vocabulary (nouns, verbs, adjectives), and the introduction of new structure vocabulary (patterns of grammar and style), especially prepositions. Other embedded structures—such as *that* clauses, *wh*-clauses, infinitive and gerund phrases, or indirect-speech patterns—seem less useful as an introduction to advanced forms of definition, classification, spatial order, and description.

The procedure

After the relative pronouns and the construction of relative clauses have been introduced and practiced in the textbook exercises using simple vocabulary already familiar to the students,[1] we close the books for a three-week (fifteen class hours) intensive project which is divided into three units: Definition, Spatial Relationships, and Facial Description. I chose these areas because of the vocabulary relevant to each (see Appendix), the frequency of each in creative and expository writing, the numerous possibilities for pictures and personal experiences, and motivational interest.

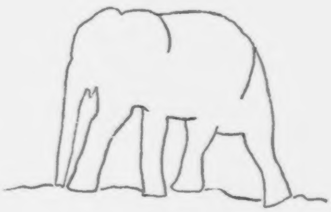
I follow approximately the same procedure for each unit, spending fewer days on Definition than on the other two units.

On the first day of the unit I hand out the "relevant vocabulary page." We discuss this page thoroughly, pronouncing and defining the words and using any new words or phrases in sentences. This page should include only high-frequency, useful words that the students do not already know. During the entire unit the students use this page as a guide in forming their relative clause constructions and paragraphs. A single page containing relevant vocabulary (correctly spelled, of course!) is much handier for the students to use than a dictionary in which they would have to look up many individual words while attempting to write and concentrate on the complex relative-clause sentences.

On the second day I begin a series of "round robin" pictures. For this exercise the teacher needs a collection of at least 100 colored pictures about the size of a sheet of writing paper and perhaps a filmstrip or two.[2] I divide the collection into several groups for the appropriate drills: objects/still lifes, people performing activities, and close-ups of faces. Each picture is mounted on white paper and given a number. I use fifteen to twenty of these pictures a day.

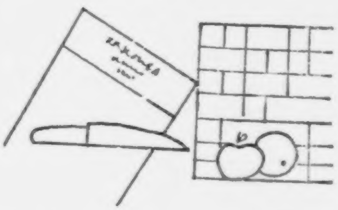
The class hour begins with the teacher writing on the blackboard two or three example sentences for a picture that he/she shows to the class. (The example sentences should include relative clauses in which the relative pronoun is the object, and perhaps a possessive.) Each student is then given a numbered picture and told to write on a separate sheet of his own paper a sentence like one of the examples on the board about something appearing in his picture. (The students are reminded to refer to their relevant vocabulary page.) When the student has finished his sentence, he writes beside it the number of the picture and passes the picture along to another student. On the first day that we do this, each member of a class of fifteen students is able to write fifteen sentences in thirty to forty minutes. The teacher circulates from student to student during the class period, checking work and answering questions. The following examples show sentences that students have written for each of the three units:

Definition:



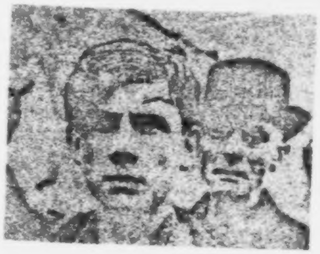
An elephant is a kind of mammal that has a long, thick nose.

Spatial Relationships:



The knife that is on top of the newspaper is lying perpendicular to the board.

Facial Description:



The old man who has sunken cheeks is standing in back of the boy.

---

[1] The texts we use are: Krohn, *English Sentence Structure* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1971), Unit 17 and Schnell-Doubleday, *E.S.S. Workbook*.

[2] An excellent series for writing purposes is the one by McGraw-Hill entitled *Adventures in Imagination*, four strips for creative writing. Each strip contains twenty-five colorful frames for thought-provoking sentences or paragraphs.

Sandra L. Schnell-Doubleday is an instructor in the department of English at Jundi Shapur University, where she teaches reading, conversation, and composition (including both introductory composition and creative writing). Her publications include *E.S.S. Workbook*, a text of paragraphs, reviews, and written exercises for introductory composition to accompany *English Sentence Structure*, by Robert Krohn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971); and a creative writing textbook for advanced ESL students, which Mrs. Doubleday is currently writing with her husband, James F. Doubleday, who also teaches English at Jundi Shapur University.

The results of the first round-robin exercise often indicate the need for further work, as students usually make errors in articles, prepositions, verb tense, or in the construction of the relative clause itself. It is necessary, therefore, to correct, return, and discuss each set of round robin exercises before going on to the next. For this reason I have found a series of three round-robin exercises most beneficial. On the first day of the round robin I use mainly pictures of objects or encourage the students to write about the objects rather than the people in the pictures because they find the relative pronouns *that* and *which* easier than those that refer to people (*who*, *whom*, *whose*). For the second round-robin drill I use primarily pictures that contain people and encourage the students to write clauses with *who*, *whom*, and *whose*. For the third drill the pictures are mixed—objects and people. Each day I follow the same procedure, slightly increasing the number of pictures in the exercise, and consequently increasing the speed of the drill, as the students tend to improve in ability.

By the time they have finished the third set of round-robin pictures, the students have written a minimum of fifty relative clauses—practicing the construction, reviewing related grammatical structures, and using many new words from the page of relevant vocabulary as well as from individual pictures. At this point I encourage them to rewrite any incorrect sentences several times at home before going on to the next activity of the project.

On approximately the fourth day of the unit—or after the students illustrate competence with relative clauses in the round-robin drills—they are ready to progress to the paragraph. Each student selects a subject from a list of topics supplied by the teacher.

Sample topics for the three units might include:

DEFINITION
A Motorcycle
A Nightingale
Fear
A Waterpipe

SPATIAL ORDER
My Bedroom
My Father's Desk
Our Living Room
Outside My Window

FACIAL DESCRIPTION
My Grandmother
My Daughter
Our Mailman
My Father-in-law

The student is asked to write one paragraph of about ten to twelve sentences, using a relative clause in the first sentence. He is encouraged to use several more relative clauses elsewhere in the paragraph. The emphasis in this paragraph is on physical description.

On the fifth or final day of the unit the students again select a subject, similar to the ones given previously. At this stage they are asked to write a very short story, about five to seven paragraphs long, not necessarily beginning with a relative clause sentence, but using several throughout the story. They are encouraged to begin and end their stories in an interesting manner as well as to describe their persons, objects, or abstractions as they have done the day before.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of the intensive relative-clause project the students have:

1. exhibited competence in writing relative clauses.

2. realized and practiced their value and frequency in composition.

3. practiced related grammatical devices such as definite articles, verb tenses, and prepositions.

4. actively used a minimum of 90–100 new vocabulary words in a brief period of time.

5. learned a basic structure and vocabulary useful in their later extensive work in advanced composition.

Moreover, the students enjoy a new sense of communicating on a more adult level that matches their sensitivity and creativity. I have found the relative-clause intensive project not only highly beneficial for the students but also a challenge and a pleasure to teach.

APPENDIX

DEFINITION VOCABULARY

Structure Words
type of
kind of
form of
sort of
model of
piece of
section of
mixture of

Substances
material
metal
gas
mineral
glass
plastic
rubber
leather

Abstractions
idea
method
concept
color
emotion
service
institution
virtue
vice
custom
art
science

Groups
group of
set of
collection of
combination of

Creatures
mammal
bird
insect
reptile
fish
crustacean

wood
stone
paper
cloth
energy
dust
powder

Instruments
tool
object
implement
utensil
mechanism
gadget
device
accessory
invention
vehicle

Containers
box
carton
bundle
barrel
bag
crate
jar
bottle

SPATIAL ORDER VOCABULARY

Compass
north
south
east
west
northeast
southeast
northwest
southwest

Flat Positions
upper left
upper right
lower left
lower right

Lines and Shapes
horizontal
vertical
diagonal
intersection
square
rectangle
triangle
circle
cube
sphere
cylinder
pyramid

Horizontal
the top
the bottom
the second from the top
the second from the bottom

Vertical
the far right
the far left
the second from (on) the left
the second from (on) the right

Interior Relationships
in the top of
in the bottom of
in the front of
in the back of
in the middle of
to the right of
to the left of
on the right
on the left
in the corner (of)

Exterior Relationships
on the corner (of)
adjacent to
parallel to
perpendicular to
in back of
in front of
next door to
beside
across from
on both sides of
directly above
directly below
facing
on top of

FACIAL DESCRIPTION

Parts	*Marks*	*Common Adjectives*
crown (dome)	bruise	almond eyes
forehead	blemish	bloodshot eyes
brow	mole	bushy eyebrows
hair line	pimple	feathery lashes
temples	wart	sunken sockets
eyebrows	birthmark	sunken cheeks
eye sockets	scar	pug nose
eyelashes	wrinkle	aquiline nose
eyelids	scratch	pierced ears
pupils	dimple	crossed teeth
iris	freckles	buck teeth
cheeks	pores	tanned complexion
jaw (jowls)	tattoo	pale complexion
chin	blush	pockmarked skin
ear lobes	whiskers	fuzzy cheeks
nostrils	sideburns	greasy skin
complexion		leathery skin
		sweaty brow
		clean-shaven face
		cross-eyed
		flaring nostrils

Cultural Content and Reading Comprehension

ABDOLJAVAD JAFARPUR, SAEED RAHBARNIA, ELIZABETH R. TUERS, and SEID M. ZIAHOSSEINY

The Free University of Iran

The authors of this article are a group of specialists engaged in the preparation of materials in English for Special Purposes for Iranian students of science, mathematics, and medicine. The director of the group, **Seid M. Ziahosseiny**, is chairman of the English Course Team at the Free University of Iran. Dr. Ziahosseiny is author of *Individualized Foreign Language Instruction* and has published articles in *Language Learning*, *TESOL*, and *ESPMENA*, as well as in the FORUM.

For many years people have been aware of and have written about the effect of culture on second-language learning. "Language is not self-dependent: it cannot be wholly understood without reference to the culture of which it is a part and the social relations which it mediates" (Nostrand 1966). However, the patterns of behavior which develop from the kind of society in which men live do not usually "operate across cultures," and "misinterpretation takes place" (Lado 1957). Applied to reading, without experience in the culture of the second language reading becomes purely verbalization, for meaning is based on experience.

Attitude and aptitude

Present-day studies, as reflected in Wallace E. Lambert's "Psychological Approaches to the Study of Language," indicate that the learner's ethnocentric tendencies and his attitudes toward the other group are believed to determine his success in learning the new language." Studies carried out with English-speaking Montreal high-school students studying French showed that their achievement was dependent not only on aptitude and intelligence but also to a great extent on a "sympathetic orientation" toward French culture and people. Similarly, in a study of Franco-American students in Maine and Louisiana, it was found that the attitudinal, and thus the motivational, variable had a great deal to do with the students' success in learning French. Where there was "pride in their French heritage" there was also "superiority in French skills" (Tuers 1969).

Fathi S. Yousef, in a report on "Cross-Cultural Testing: An Aspect of the Resistance Reaction," found that often the problem was not inability to communicate in English, but rather "an unwillingness or inability to understand or accept the culture of the target language" (Tuers 1969).

Literature and cultural values

More than any other aspect, the literature of a language carries the meanings and values of its culture. Thus, a reader in a second language must be able to interpret not only the language of the characters he encounters but also their behavior. However, such cultural meaning often escapes the reader, causing him to misinterpret or misunderstand.

It has been the contention of one of the authors (Tuers 1969) that foreign students "should be introduced to the concept of culture first through acquaintance with the elements of their own culture....There is no better way for this to be accomplished than through the medium of their nation's own literature in translation....This will serve not only to prepare them for the study of American and English literatures and culture, but may also serve to alleviate some of the misunderstanding of and resentment toward Western culture."

In 1969 this author used the model developed in her dissertation to teach reading at the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan. The class of fourteen consisted of Japanese, Latin American, and Thai students. After an introductory lesson on the concept of culture and a presentation of a cultural checklist, the students were given stories out of their own literature in English translation. Without exception, they were able to discover elements of their own culture in these stories. Seven out of the fourteen students requested permission to read more than the assigned stories, and several expressed thanks for being allowed to read these stories. If one may be permitted an assumption, as a result of such motivation on the part of the students their comprehension of elements of American culture discovered through the American stories subsequently assigned was excellent.

A recent psycholinguistic study of the relationships between ethnic-linguistic attitudes and the methods used in second-language reading instruction was done by Benita Tang (1974). She found that "the more favorable a learner's attitude toward his native language is, the more effective is the method of "translation," but that "there is a positive correlation between favorable attitude toward the second language (English) and second-language reading performance when the method of instruction uses only English (the second language)."

THE PAHLAVI EXPERIMENT

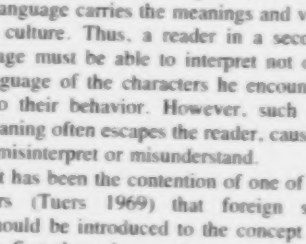
During the past six years at Pahlavi University (Shiraz, Iran), there have been many arguments, pro and con, concerning the advisability of using non-culture-bound reading materials, or, more precisely, of using Persian stories in English and articles about Persia in the freshman and sophomore service-English courses. In an effort to shed more light on this problem, an experiment was conducted in 1975 in the summer intensive course at Pahlavi University.

The method

Six sections of approximately upper-intermediate level students entering Pahlavi University were used in the project. Two sections were given reading selections principally about America (hereafter referred to as Group A); two sections were given selections about Persia (hereafter referred to as Group B); and the control group (hereafter referred to as Group C) of two sections was given the regular program, which included a mixture of culture-bound and non-culture-bound materials. Group A contained 81 students; Group B, 76; and Group C, 73. Fifteen selections were taught to Group A, fourteen to Group B, and ten to Group C.

Pre-tests were constructed for each reading selection. Students were to read the selection

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE



outside of class, then take the pre-test before any discussion or teaching took place.

The results

The pre-tests showed 64% comprehension for Group A, 71% comprehension for Group B, and 73% comprehension for Group C. These results seemed surprising until further analysis was made of the situation.

We calculated the number in each group that had 50% or more correct. In this case the group using non-Iranian materials scored higher—76%—while the Persian-materials group scored 70% and the control group 73%.

The selections for both experimental groups and the control group were checked for reading difficulty with the SRA Reading Ease Calculator. (They were not checked before because we did not obtain the calculator until after the experiment was completed.) Although this measuring device is designed for native speakers of English, we have found it surprisingly accurate for our students as well. The results showed a much higher readability for Group C (control group) materials: 80% *easy–very easy*, 10% *hard*, and 10% bordering *easy–hard*. Group B (Persian-oriented) materials measured much lower in readability: only 20% *easy*, 60% *hard–very hard*, and 20% bordering *easy–hard*. Group A (non-Persian) materials measured 29% *easy*, 50% *hard–very hard*, and 21% *easy–hard*.

Conclusion

This would seem to indicate that for Iranian college students, reading materials should be based on the target culture rather than the native culture. It seems logical to argue that foreign-language students are interested in the culture of the people whose language they are trying to learn. This interest seems to motivate the students to pay more attention to the content of the reading material.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Lado, Robert. 1957. *Linguistics across cultures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Lambert, Wallace E. 1965. Psychological approaches to the study of language. In *Teaching English as a second language*, ed. Harold B. Allen. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 25–50.

Nostrand, Howard Lee. 1966. Describing and teaching the sociocultural context of a foreign language and literature. In *Trends in language teaching*, ed. Albert Valdman. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 1–25.

Tang, Benita T. 1974. A psycholinguistic study of the relationships between children's ethnic-linguistic attitudes and the effectiveness of methods used in second-language reading instruction. *TESOL Quarterly*, 8, 3, pp. 233–51.

Tuers, Elizabeth R. 1969. *Culture through literature: a guide to the preparation of English language reading materials for speakers of Arabic in Egypt and the Levant*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan.

MALAYSIA

Communicating Comprehension through Graphics

JUDY KOH SHOOK YIN

Malay Women's Teachers' College, Malacca

The conventional approach to assessing students' skills in listening and reading is to require them to answer questions (orally or in writing) or to give summaries or explanations of what they have heard or read. This approach is a good one provided students have attained a level of proficiency which enables them to verbalize what they have understood. However, if students are well below this level and do not have the language proficiency for verbal expression, how are we to evaluate their listening and reading comprehension? Are we to assume that their understanding of the listening or reading passage is absolutely nil? Surely not, for a student may have *some* understanding of what he has read or heard but may not be able to express himself comprehensibly because he lacks the necessary vocabulary and structures.

I recommend that such students use graphic forms to indicate their understanding of what they have read or heard. If they are to communicate their understanding of information in this way, however, there is an obvious need for the information to be carefully selected. We should use only information that can be illustrated; for example, descriptions of locations and directions, and simple narratives.

Judy Koh Shook Yin teaches English and trains students to become teachers of English at the Malay Women's Teachers' College in Malacca. Among her special interests are English for communication and methods of teaching English. Mrs. Koh has written a number of English textbooks currently used in Malaysian secondary schools.

Three examples

Here are some examples of selected information that can be used to evaluate listening and reading comprehension through the students' graphic work:

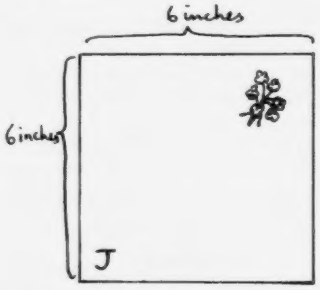
Example 1: Description of a Simple Object

Situation: Imagine that you have recently lost a handkerchief of this description:

It is a square white handkerchief, six inches by six inches. It has a small bouquet of flowers embroidered in one of the corners. At the corner diagonally opposite to it, an initial "J" has been embroidered.

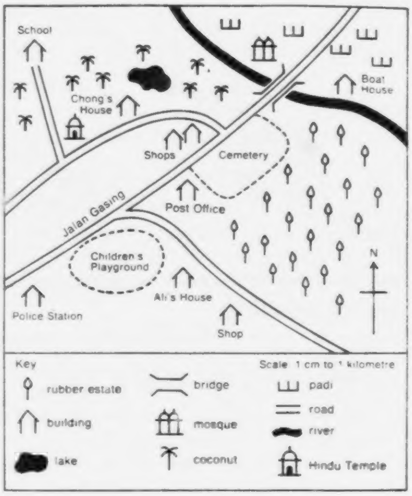
Make a rough sketch of your handkerchief so that whoever finds it will know that it is yours.

Required Sketch:



Example 2: Directions to a place

Given Map:



Situation: Imagine that you have been told to meet your friend Ali at a certain place. Here are the directions to the place:

Start from the boat house and go towards Jalan Gasing. Then drive along Jalan Gasing, going in a southwest direction. About one kilometer from the bridge on Jalan Gasing there is a turnoff on the right side of the road. Turn onto the road and drive along the road for about $2\frac{1}{2}$ kilometers. Park your car by the roadside. Then walk for about half a kilometer. Wait for me there.

Mark the place on the map where you are to meet Ali.

Example 3: A Narrative

Situation: Imagine that you are working as an artist with a popular children's magazine. You have been asked to illustrate in comic-strip form the following story:

Once upon a time there was a boy named Hassan. Hassan had always wanted to own a bicycle. His mother knew what he longed for and on his birthday she gave him a brand new bicycle as a birthday present.

"Be careful when you're cycling," she warned him. "Make sure you hold onto the handles carefully and pedal your bicycle carefully, too!"

"Don't worry, mum" Hassan reassured her. "I'm a pretty good cyclist."

So Hassan started out on his cycling adventure. For fast, thrilling cycling, he went down a slope.

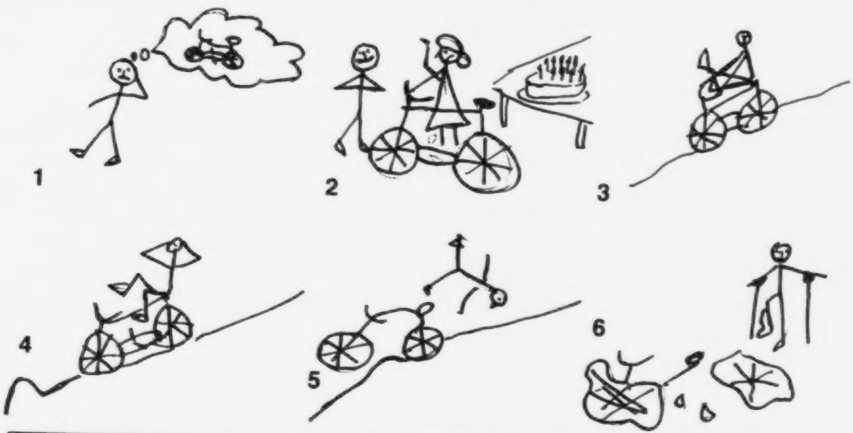
"No need to pedal!" he exclaimed excitedly as he came speeding down the slope with his legs wide apart.

"No need even to hold the handles," said Hassan confidently as he sped down the slope a second time.

But alas, he hadn't expected a stone to be in his path. Before he knew it the bicycle wobbled and went out of control.

Sch...eek...bom! Hassan fell off as the bicycle headed downhill on its own. Hassan injured his right foot badly, and as for his bicycle—it was a wreck!

Required Sketches:



NETHERLANDS

On Exploiting Native Speakers

C. J. Koster
Amsterdam Free University

It has become generally accepted that in teaching a foreign language one should aim at an integration of the various skills, and consequently at integrated practice, rather than train the student in one skill at a time. This article describes one such attempt at integration.

In the last few years there have been various suggestions for combining practice in the "four skills" of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The atomistic approach, though still sometimes essential, as in the case of pronunciation practice and, perhaps, pattern drills, is rapidly giving way to an approach which considers linguistic and communicative competence as more than just the sum of the four skills. Next to individualized teaching, integrated teaching has become the key word of the '70s.

Artificial communicative practice

The one great and often inevitable drawback has always been that however much a course is oriented towards the acquisition of communicative competence, teachers and students are still play-acting. They pretend to be talking to a policeman, they pretend to be buying a new dress in a department store, they pretend to be polite, or angry, they even pretend to be chatting up a girl.[1] Brooks's well-known statement about pattern practice, "It is...exercise...undertaken solely for the sake of practice, in order that performance may become habitual and automatic,"[2] might be equally well applied to the artificial "communicative" kind of practice in which a student acts as if he is saying something as a tourist, a policeman, or a member of the SPCA[3] to someone who is pretending to be listening and responding as a shop assistant,[4] a tourist, or a bullfighter. It is easy enough to tell the student that pretending is part of the game; it is not always all that easy to really convince him of the relevance of the rules of the game.

Relevant practice

At the Amsterdam Free University we have tried to make the students of English realize how relevant practice may be by putting them in situations where the element of pretending is almost wholly absent. One of the more successful attempts has been to let them exploit native speakers—after all, what are native speakers abroad *for*, if not for exploiting?

The students in question were a group of about eighteen- to twenty-one-year-old Dutch students in the Department of English. Briefly, they were asked to devise a questionnaire on the various aspects of tourism, interview English-speaking tourists in Amsterdam, and write a report for the local Tourist Board containing suggestions for the improvement of tourist facilities. All this gave them practice in at least three of the four skills.

A useful project

The whole project required a lot of time, and in view of this it is surprising that no one got bored with it. But it did serve its purpose. The students were very much involved in all the various stages. There was no "pretending," no make-believe. They had to think very hard about what market research is, what tourism is, what tourists do and do not expect, what could or could not be offered to visitors. They spoke English all the time, regarding the discussions before the interview stage as a good way of preparing for the actual interviews. They listened to English; they wrote English; and they did it with a very specific purpose. And because it was very real, they felt very much involved in what they were doing. They talked to real British and American people; they heard various accents; they had to be very careful in wording their questions, in writing down the answers, in drawing conclusions, and in writing the final report. They had great fun.

First of all, the students were asked to draw up a questionnaire. The idea was basically to find out what measures might be taken to get more tourists to visit Amsterdam. So the students had to go in for market research, without really knowing what market research was. Consequently, they had to find out from scratch what kind of questions would result in responses that would enable them to draw up a list of suggestions for the Tourist Board.

Devising the questionnaires

For this purpose they were divided into groups of three; each group was told to have a brainstorming session, discuss some basic problem areas, and make a preliminary list of questions. After forty-five minutes each group reported its findings. The vigor with which the students tore the various "principles," "starting points," "problem areas," and "questions" to pieces was a joy to behold. They were much more severe in their criticism than in most other discussions, because they all realized that it just would not do to confront a tourist with a question that might be stupid or even ridiculous. They preferred to be torn to pieces by their fellow students rather than run the risk of being laughed at later by a foreign visitor to the city. Thus the three boys who had concentrated exclusively on the tourist facilities in the red-light district[5] were asked quite bluntly not to behave like immature sex freaks but to grow up and be serious.

---

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE: *chatting up a girl*: a British expression for which there is no exact American equivalent. It means that a boy talks to a girl in a pleasant way so that she will like him and perhaps agree to go on a date with him or accompany him to some social function.

[2] Nelson Brooks, *Language and Language Learning: Theory and Practice* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960), p. 142.

[3] EDITOR'S NOTE: *SPCA* = Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

[4] EDITOR'S NOTE: *Shop assistant*: in American English, *salesperson*.

When some of the key problems and key questions had been identified and agreed on, the students went back to their groups again for another stab[6] at drawing up a questionnaire. Eventually, they all handed in their lists to a group of students who were to collate the various lists and produce a provisional questionnaire. This questionnaire was again discussed in class, improved and refined where necessary, and, finally, submitted to a market research expert, an acquaintance of one of the students. This professional was kind enough not to suggest more than one or two changes and additional questions, which were duly incorporated.

Doing the interviews

A copy of the final questionnaire was then given to each student, who was to interview at least three English-speaking tourists. This was the tricky part. One girl came back to report that she had been hanging around the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum for an hour and a half ("honest!"), that she had seen quite a few English-speaking foreigners ("and some looked friendly enough"), but had not dared to go up to them to ask for an interview. However, those who could not face up to it alone managed to overcome their shyness in the company of a fellow student, though I must say that I suspect at least two students invented the responses themselves over a glass of beer—no tourist in his right mind would have said the things they reported.

The questionnaire had been devised in such a way that most questions were the yes/no type, and could be easily ticked off. About twenty percent of the questions were open-ended. On the basis of the results obtained and their own experiences in interviewing the "native speakers," every student wrote a report of how he or she had approached the tourists, how they had responded, and what his or her preliminary conclusions were. These reports, and the answer sheets, were subsequently collected by three students, who wrote the final report with recommendations for the Tourist Board.

---

[5] Editor's Note: *Red-light district*: a district in which houses of prostitution are numerous.

[6] Editor's Note: *stab*: an attempt; an effort.

NIGERIA

Why Don't We Ask "Why"?

K.R. Lakshminarayanan
E.C.W.A. Secondary School, Igbaja

Of the varied causes which determine an event, the final cause, which determines the purpose, is the most decisive and important. —Will Durant

We all live under the same sky, but don't all have the same horizon. —Konrad Adenauer

Teaching English to nonnative children has its motives, principles, and methods. It is a meaningful activity only if right learning takes place, and to make this happen we must know *why* we should teach, *what* we should teach, and *how*. If we are to succeed, our motives must be in harmony with the *why(s)* of children. To know why they should learn English, we must analyze and understand the factors that govern their motives. Once we have the key to *why*, the rest follows, because *what* depends on *why*, and *how* on *what* and *why*. Without the *why*, the *what* and the *how* have neither meaning nor function.

Children and their needs

Innumerable children are learning English as a nonnative language. They live in different parts of the world and under different conditions. Their needs can be recognized by looking at the needs of the society in which they live.

Every society needs a language for meaningful and systematic *communication* and *instruction*. In most countries English is used, in one capacity or another, as a nonnative language. Let us view its role in our lives in the light of the two language functions mentioned above and delineate its usefulness.

COMMUNICATION

Oral

Local:

- Is English a necessary means for oral communication within a community?
- Is native-like pronunciation essential?
- If English is used as a link language between different language-speaking communities, at what stage in the lives of the majority of literates does such interaction occur?
- Of what nature is such interaction—social, official, business, or all of these?

International:

- If English is required for oral communication at the international level, are children involved?
- Among adults, what percentage of literates will have an opportunity to come into contact with speakers of English from other countries?
- If a sizable number had such opportunity, at what stage in their lives would it occur?
- For what purposes would they be communicating?

Culture:

- Is it necessary for all children, at some time during their educational careers, to be aware of and understand one or another English-speaking culture?
- If such awareness and understanding is necessary to promote communication at either the national or international levels, when will they require it?
- If only a particular group requires it, when, and for what purpose, do they need it?

Written

- Is English required for written communication within a single community or between several communities?
- What are those areas (if any) where the local language[1] fails?
- If English is required at the international level, when does such necessity arise and what are the registers required?

INSTRUCTION

Every country needs administrators, men of commerce, doctors, engineers, economists, lawyers, scientists, teachers, technicians, and so on. To fill responsible positions in government and private enterprise, and to perform to the satisfaction of their superiors and themselves, *specialized knowledge* in all branches of learning is essential.

Let us ask:

- Is English required as a medium of instruction in educational institutions? If it is, at what levels, and why?
- If English is preferred to the local language as medium, why?
- Can a local language replace English as a competent conveyor of knowledge at higher levels at any time in the future?
- If preparations are being made for such transfer, what are they and how satisfactory are they?
- Will the changeover jeopardize easy comprehension and acquisition of knowledge?

THE WHYS—IDENTIFICATION

A few examples will reveal the importance of *why*. They will also indicate the necessity of reassessing the situation and determining the kinds of roles English should play in our lives.

---

[1] I prefer *local language* to *mother tongue* or *native tongue* because there are nonnatives who learn in a medium other than their mother tongue.

K.R. Lakshminarayanan teaches English at E.C.W.A. Secondary School, Igbaja, Nigeria. A native of India, Mr. Lakshminarayanan holds a Master's degree in English language and literature from Madras University, and taught English literature to undergraduates in Madras from 1962 to 1968. From that time until 1977, when he undertook his present assignment, he taught English language to high school leavers in Ethiopia. Several articles by Mr. Lakshminarayanan, written while he was teaching in Ethiopia, have appeared in previous issues of the FORUM.

The national level

Ethiopia, although multilingual, has Amharic as its national language. Ethiopians use it for all kinds of oral and written communication. They require English only for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, for Amharic lacks the vocabulary and lucidity to convey knowledge in its higher realms.

India, another multilingual country, has a constitutionally declared national language—Hindi. For reasons that need not be gone into here, certain sections of the population have not yet accepted Hindi as a medium for oral and written communication between themselves and others. English therefore continues to be the link language among her citizens for both activities. Quite a few states use English for written communication within their borders for official and business purposes, although a switch over to the local medium is being attempted. Besides, English continues to be the medium of instruction beyond the high-school level because acquisition of knowledge is considered better, more direct, and more economical when done in English.

Nigeria is also a multilingual country, but without a common language of its own. Here English is used as a link language for all kinds of oral and written communication, and as medium of instruction from the elementary-school level on, because the regional languages are not well enough developed.

France and Germany do not require English for either communication or instruction.

The international level

The fact that all these countries (and others) require English for international communication is too vague a *why* to justify the teaching of spoken English to children, with imitative practice of native models, for:

a. No child has an immediate use for such instruction, and at most a negligible percentage of these children will in their adulthood have an opportunity to go abroad.

b. There is no scope for social communication and interaction in large numbers. The bulk of the educated class are not often going to step across continents and oceans to have a chat with native speakers. Sometimes we hardly have time even to say "hello" to our neighbors for days.

c. Communication for official, administrative, commercial, and technical purposes takes place between individual representatives of two or more governments, not between the entire educated society of two or more nationalities.

It follows that teacher and child need not labor to master Received Pronunciation. Even if they tried they would not succeed, because, however ingenious the methods, the aids, the teacher, and the children, these children cannot practice properly as long as they are not in a living society of that language.[2] I hasten to add that distortion of sounds is not to be allowed or encouraged.

Adults who have an opportunity for such communication can be given training in culture-blend speech for a period before their departure by the local British Council or the USICA. Their desire to complete their studies abroad and to be able to understand and communicate in another society are motives strong enough to promote successful completion of such a program. And for officials and businessmen, each government or concerned body can conduct courses to teach the jargon and manner of conduct that will enable them to take part in international gatherings.

As they grow into adolescence, certain children show an aptitude for language and a willingness to learn more of it. They should by all means be taught native-like pronunciation, speech patterns, and aesthetic and cultural aspects. This should be done also in view of the possibility of their becoming future English teachers.

A word about culture, since there is so much talk about the learning of ESOL being incomplete without a knowledge of the culture: The necessity of adequate knowledge of an English-speaking culture arises only if a nonnative finds himself in an "English" situation or environment. This opportunity will not arise in the case of most nonnative children or adolescents. Again, the kind of "English" atmosphere the nonnative will be in will determine the kind of English culture he should be acquainted with.

CONCLUSION

Pray, why should we then stuff the child unnecessarily with speech patterns, pronunciation, sound system, and culture? Should we continue to depend on first-language behavior to teach English as another language and follow the same order—speak, read, write? Instead of wasting the time and the energy of the teacher and the children in these directions, had they better not be spent in other useful areas? Instead of simply implementing with unquestioning faith well-intentioned but unsuitable pedagogical theories of native speakers and doing research as to *how* to teach, why don't we make a realistic assessment of our differing needs in learning English at different levels,[3] and then decide whether (and when) to teach all skills or a particular one only, what to emphasize, and related details.

Such a soul-searching survey and study should eventually recommend sensible substitutions for our theory-oriented philosophy of teaching.

SINGAPORE

RELC Regional Seminar

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Language Centre (RELC) will hold its fifteenth regional seminar, 21–25 April 1980, in Singapore. The theme of the seminar is "Evaluation and Measurement of Language Competence and Performance."

The objectives of the seminar are: to review current methods of testing language competence and performance; to consider research in the field of language testing and its relationship to language teaching; to discuss the problems of language testing in the multilingual and multicultural societies of Southeast Asia; to stimulate interest and research in the field of language testing in the region.

Abstracts are invited on topics relevant to the theme of the seminar. Further information and invitations to participate in the seminar can be obtained from the following address:

Director
(Attention: Chairman, Seminar
Planning Committee)
SEAMEO Regional Language Centre
RELC Building
30 Orange Grove Road
Singapore 1025
Republic of Singapore

---

[2] E.W.F. Tomlin, in "English as an International Language," says: "None of us asks of a foreigner that he should speak exactly as we do. If he tried, we should often find him difficult to understand"—ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM, *14*, 2 (April–June 1974). Braj B. Kachru, in "The New Englishes and Old Models," says: "A nonnative RP (Received Pronunciation) speaker will appear incongruent if he puts on this linguistic mask but does not combine it with the mannerisms and cultural traits of an RP speaker."—ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM, *15*, 3 (July 1977), p. 31.

[3] "The uses have to be perceived from the consumer's vantage point, not that of the native speaker's linguistically secure perch." Ibid., p. 33.

SWEDEN

Sixth AILA World Congress 1981

The next World Congress of the Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée (AILA) will be held at the University of Lund, Lund, Sweden, 9–15 August 1981. The address for information and correspondence is:

AILA World Congress 1981
University of Lund
Fack
S-221 01 Lund
Sweden

UNITED STATES

Individualizing the Lower-Level Composition Class

LINDA LONON BLANTON
Central YMCA Community College, Chicago

Teaching composition at any level of proficiency has its difficulties, but in lower-level ESL classes it is especially problematic. Assuming that the students are adult, literate, and perhaps even well educated, they want very badly to appear as sophisticated in the new language as they do in their own, yet at the beginning they have neither the vocabulary nor the grammatical structures to write more than a few isolated sentences. Without a reservoir of informational content that can be easily expressed in the target language, to put sentences together in extended discourse seems an impossible task. This problem is compounded at the lower levels by the placement of students who know almost no English with those who are beginning to be quite proficient, at least orally, and may even be able to read and write to a limited degree. Unless the ESL program is large enough to allow for a number of finely divided lower-level sections, the students in a beginning composition class will have a considerable range of abilities. How, then, can the teacher go about getting them to write? First, how can the teacher give even the students of lowest proficiency content that they can manipulate in a composition? Second, how can the teacher allow for differing degrees of sophistication in students' written output?

The following strategies, when used in sequence, provide a viable unified approach to teaching beginning composition to a heterogeneous group, while allowing for varying levels of individual performance:

Strategy 1: The teacher presents situational information orally, as if telling a story.

Strategy 2: The students retell the "story" by answering the teacher's questions; the more advanced students are called on first; after hearing the information repeated a number of times, less advanced students are able to participate.

Strategy 3: The students read the text which was "told" by the teacher.

Strategy 4: The students do exercises on the organization, grammatical structures, vocabulary, and mechanics of the text.

Strategy 5: The students read a second text, which provides the same situational framework, organization, structures, etc., as the first text, but different content.

Strategy 6: The students use the second text as a model for their own compositions, changing the content to fit individual experience.

Strategy 7: The students edit their writing with the help of the model and the teacher.

Strategies 1, 2, and 3 provide the students the needed pool of information/content to draw from for their own compositions. Furthermore, they allow the teacher to present a single lesson to all the students, a matter of no small importance to the teacher who wants to provide stimulating and interesting classwork for each student but must find a starting point for the group as a whole.

The focus in a composition class is, of course, the composition. The purpose of all work that precedes it, especially for lower-level students, is to provide the tools with which to write. Preliminary work (Strategies 1–4) prepares students for the model (Strategy 5), and then the model serves as a guide for all the students in a class to write according to their individual abilities (Strategy 6). Those who are weak in English or feel insecure in the language will at first make very few changes in the model, replacing only those details that would make the text untrue for them. (See *Sample A: Student Composition based on Model 4*. Note that the words in italics are changes the student has made.) Students who are more proficient will begin almost immediately to use the model as a resource for more original writing, manipulating details and structures in the model to generate their own sentences. (See *Sample B: Student Composition based on Model 4*. Note the addition of new information, for example, *roses, Greek pictures, his wife's preference;* also note the joining of information presented separately in the model, for example, *good tip because the waiters are friendly*.) By the time students have gotten to their own compositions, they are familiar with the situation, vocabulary, grammatical structures, and organizational framework that they need to use. Strategy 4 has provided them with a detailed examination of the resources in the first text; strategy 5 provides their immediate reintegration in the second text, which serves as the model.

Students should be trained at an early stage to edit what they write (Strategy 7), for the more astute they become at recognizing their own mistakes, the faster they will progress. The students' first writing from the model can be considered a first draft, which they then read through four or five times on their own, checking once for grammar, once for organization, once for spelling, and so on, using the model as reference. The teacher, who has circulated through the class giving help during the first writing, can then be consulted to read through the first draft and point out any lingering problems. The second draft is a corrected or expanded version of the first draft. Keeping drafts together in folders, one for each student, builds a record of student work which also serves as reference material for the students to consult for future compositions. Folders containing each student's writing also provide a handy way for the teacher to be continually aware of each student's problems and progress.

Linda Lonon Blanton is an instructor in ESL at the English Language Institute, Central YMCA College, Chicago, Illinois. In addition to her ten years of experience in teaching English to foreign students in the United States, Dr. Blanton taught for two years in the Bourguiba Institute in Tunisia under the auspices of the U.S. Peace Corps. She has written two books related to the subject of her article: *Elementary Composition Practice, Books 1 and 2* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publications).

The strategies I have outlined provide one solution to the major problems found in many lower-level composition classes: all students have something to write about and the tools with which to do it, and the student's own level of proficiency determines the complexity of his handling of the content. Moreover, students relate the content to their own lives, a factor that aids in their control of it. Most importantly, students are *writing*, not copying or memorizing a set piece, and the writing that they are doing, even on a simple level, makes use of sophisticated principles and techniques of extended discourse.

Model 4 (in a series) Followed by Student Writing Samples Based on the Model

THE RESTAURANT

John likes to eat out. He goes to a restaurant for dinner almost every weekend. He doesn't like to wait for a special occasion. He usually invites his girl friend to go with him.

John's favorite restaurant is a small Italian place on Clark Street. There are only a few tables in the restaurant. There is a red-and-white tablecloth on each table. There is a large candle in a wine bottle on each table. There are wine bottles on the walls. There are plants in the corners. There is a small fireplace in the back of the restaurant. The food is delicious. John sometimes orders spaghetti or pizza. John and his girl friend usually eat slowly and leisurely. They enjoy their dinner. The waiters are friendly and the service is quick. John always leaves a big tip.

In conclusion, John always has a pleasant evening when he goes to his favorite restaurant (Blanton 1978).

Sample A: Student Composition
(first draft)

I like to eat out. *I* go to a restaurant for dinner almost every *month*. *I* don't wait for a special occasion. *I* usually invite *my* girl friend to go with *me*.

My favorite restaurant is a small *French* place on *La Salle* street. There are only a few tables in the restaurant. There is a *blue* tablecloth on each table. There are some *elegant lamps* on the walls. There are plants in the corners. There is a small fireplace in the back of the restaurant. The food is delicious. *I* sometimes order *soup* or pizza. *I* and *my* girl friend[1] usually eat slowly and leisurely. *We* enjoy *our* dinner. The waiters are friendly and *kind*. *I* always leave a big tip.

In conclusion, *I* always have a pleasant evening when *I* go to *my* favorite restaurant.

Sample B: Student Composition
(first draft)

I like to eat out. *I* go to a restaurant for dinner every *Saturday evening*. I don't wait for a special occasion. *I always go with my wife*.

My favorite restaurant is a *large Greek* place on Halsted Street. There are *several* tables in the restaurant. There is a *green*-and-white tablecloth on each table. There are *red roses* on each table. There are *large pictures from Greek places* (towns or villages) on the walls. There are plants in the corners. There is a large fireplace in the back of the restaurant. The food is delicious. *I* sometimes order *saganaki* or *gyros*. *My wife prefers chopped chicken*. *We* enjoy *our* dinner. *I* always leave a *good* tip *because* the waiters are friendly and the service is quick.

In conclusion, *I* always have a pleasant evening when *I* go to *my* favorite restaurant *with my wife*.

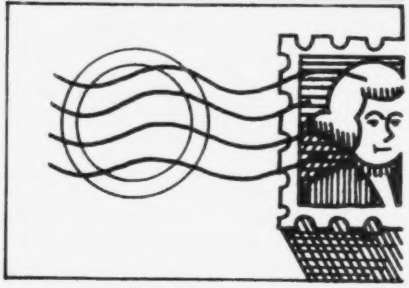
REFERENCE

Blanton, Linda Lonon. 1978. *Elementary composition practice: Book 1*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers.

---

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE: The more usual order would be *My girl friend and I*.

Letters



On Labeling Functional-Notional Units

Hove, Sussex, England
August 1979

Dear Editor:

I found the three articles on the functional-notional syllabus in the April [1979] issue very interesting. Like a lot of other people, I have been occupied with it myself in the last few years and have been applying it in a number of ways in my own materials.

But it strikes me that in one article it is interpreted with almost Byzantine rigidity, with (in my opinion) potentially disastrous effects in some cases.

I refer to Mary Finocchiaro's otherwise excellent article, where, in speaking of functional-notional units, she states:

> The title of the unit is always expressed in functional terms so that the learners are immediately given the necessary mental "set" or readiness so essential for focusing their attention on the communicative purpose of the dialogue or passage.

This may be appropriate for some target groups, but by no means for all. There are for these other groups far better ways of indicating the functional-notional content and of creating the right mental set than through such labels as "Expressing Doubt," "Giving Advice," "Requesting Directions," or "Apologizing." To insist on such labels is to misunderstand the whole nature of a functional-notional syllabus, which, like any other syllabus, specifies a set of *terminal* objectives, not necessarily the *best means of attaining them*. How we label the content of each unit will depend on all sorts of things. But whatever we do, we should not confuse the steps along the way with the destination. Even in courses with a strong functional-notional content, there may be many units that contain things that have no specific functional aim, and need none for justification: numbers, the general structure of the English tense system, information about the target culture, etc. There are many examples.

In any case, a unit may, and often must, contain more than one focus. If our materials are to be reasonably realistic and true to life, can we really devote them to one function alone? How often in real life do we have conversations devoted exclusively to "apologizing" or "expressing frustration"? To devote a whole unit of materials to such things alone will, far from arousing the right mental set, merely lead to unutterable tedium and boredom! And if the materials are not devoted exclusively to one function, what on earth is the purpose of inventing labels for them that suggest that they are?

Very often, we can arouse both attention and the right mental set through a heading like "Lost" or "Arrival in the Big City." These may be far better than something like "Requesting Directions," because:

1. The title suggests a whole series of communicative operations grouped under one theme, such as "asking the way," "asking for clarification when you don't understand," "expressing anger and frustration," "thanking people," etc.
2. Such titles are *far more comprehensible and immediate* to many learners than the rather abstract terms used by explicit functionalists.

Functionalist metalanguage falls into the same trap that grammatical metalanguage does. It too often leads to the learning of labels rather than language. It arouses in learners the entirely false expectation that a set of phrases or rules learned by rote is a substitute for a true generative grasp of language. And all too often the label, whether functional or grammatical, is entirely superfluous. Is there really any need to use the labels at all most of the time? If the unit starts with a general title like "Lost!" and then pictures someone arriving, stopping people in the street, asking "Excuse me, can you tell me the way to ...?" and then getting lost, is it really going to help very much if we lard up our lessons with ponderous labels like "Requesting Directions"? Will it not be perfectly obvious from the situations alone that this (among other things) is what the unit is about? Language teaching, including materials development, is as much a dramatic, aesthetic activity, requiring imagination and variety of approach, as it is a semi- (often a pseudo-) scientific discipline. To be successful requires as much artistic insight and imagination as it does solid linguistic background. Of course, our materials and techniques must aim at communicative competence rather than the mere accretion of structure and pattern unrelated to real meaning. But to insist that our materials groan under [illegible] heavy labels as Mary Finocchiaro suggests is about as sensible as telling a dramatist that he or she must give a clear label to whatever philosophical or ethical issue the play wishes to explore in each act and scene.

There are many ways of skinning a cat, even a functional-notional one.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT O'NEILL

Dr. Finocchiaro's reply

I agree with Prof. O'Neill's objection to the sentence he quotes in his letter. I violated one of my own principles—stated often in teacher-training courses and in texts—not to use the words *never* and *always* when making statements about any facet of the learning process.

The statement, however, has been taken out of the context of the article, which makes strong pleas for flexibility and eclecticism while advocating the very strategies and techniques that Prof. O'Neill mentions. (See pages 15*ff.*, particularly page 16.) Is it possible that Prof. O'Neill was interrupted in his reading?

My aim in writing the article was to help Forum readers become increasingly aware that units that will grow out of the F-N syllabus will contain more than one focus, that they will be based on sound educational, sociological, and psychological principles, and that the objectives of the syllabus can be reached by a variety of means. Much of what has been written to date has been rigid and dogmatic and has made insufficient mention of the classroom.

I cannot agree that "Lost" or "Situations" may not restrict the functions and notions one hopes learners will acquire. In the materials we are writing, we try to make sure that the learners will interpret (and later produce) a function or a number of functions in a variety of mini-dialogues covering the widest range of situations and themes. Neither can I agree that numbers and tenses have no specific functional aim. For example, Indignant Husband: What! You bought two dresses with the money I gave you for food this morning?

In any case, does the title—situationally or functionally expressed—really matter? It is the content of the unit or lesson and its presentation which will determine whether and what learning—if any—will take place. And that, as we all know and as Prof. O'Neill states so eloquently, results "from a dramatic, aesthetic activity requiring imagination and a variety of approach."

Teaching Verbs at the Primary Levels

46, 2nd. Cross Road
Kankesanturai
Sri Lanka
28 April 1979

Dear Editor:

I have been reading the Forum for many years, and I must gratefully say that this wonderful magazine has helped me tremendously, especially with ideas for teaching Sri Lankan children. I have been teaching English for the past twenty-five years to students of all ages from the primary to the advanced classes, including working boys and girls.

It has been a practice in schools for the teacher to teach students through the medium of grammar (parts of speech), for example, "present perfect continuous tense." For a student in Sri Lanka, a country where English has deteriorated to the very extreme, I feel that such an approach is far too complicated—especially when students sometimes confuse even the past tense and the past participle. For a weak student to try to remember such a long term as *past* (or *future*) *perfect continuous tense* is strenuous for the student as well as for the teacher. Furthermore, English is only one of the many subjects a student has to study, and a student cannot be expected to devote all his or her time to English alone.

For these reasons I wish to share my ideas, especially about the teaching of verbs, in the hope that they may be helpful to other teachers in similar situations. I have achieved good results with this approach.

First of all, the students should be taught the following usages:

I: *am, is, are, was, were*

1. Used as main verb
   Ex.: I *am* in school.
   He *is* in the garden.
2. Used as a helping (auxiliary) verb with the main verb ending in *-ing*
   Ex.: I *am going* to school.
   He *is playing* in the garden.
3. Used in passive-voice sentences
   Ex.: The window *is broken.*
   Coconut husks *are soaked and beaten* to loosen the fibers.
4. Used in passive-voice sentences with BEING
   Ex.: The letters *are being typed.*
   The child *is being cared for.*

II: *has, have, had*

1. Used as main verb
   Ex.: I *have* a book.
   He *has* a pen.
2. Used as a helping (auxiliary) verb with the past participle
   Ex.: He *has taken* his book.
   He *has* already *taken* his book.
   He *has* just *taken* his book.
3. Used in passive-voice sentences with BEEN
   Ex.: The school *has been taken over* by the Government.
   (Also with adverbs *already, just,* etc.)
4. Used with BEEN and the *-ing* form with adverbs like *since, now,* etc.
   Ex.: I *have been living* here since 1957.
   She *has been playing* for two hours now.

This represents some of what I do in the primary stages, where I have encountered very little difficulty in using this method.

I will be happy and grateful to get any criticism or suggestions that will be helpful to me in the teaching of English.

Yours faithfully,
Mrs. F. B. De Lile
President, English
Literary Association

News from Zambia

Lusaka, Zambia
17 July 1979

Dear Editor of Forum:

Much language has proceeded from mouth via ether to ear since you published my letter in April '78.

For one thing, I've completed a year lecturing in phonetics to would-be teachers of (or in) English during the B.A. in Education course at the University of Zambia.

I did submit to you another letter with some practical suggestions, but presumably it wasn't published, though I don't see every copy of the Forum. In fact, sad to say, it is less available in the much bigger library of UNZA than that of "my old college."

Of a class of eighty students, including Ghanaian and Asian as well as Zambian, over fifty percent had already acquired two or even three other languages, so that English was by no means "second"—so we always called it "acquired" and ourselves Youzealers, that is, users of EAL.

My research shows (*a*) that most who master a second language do it "automotively," as Illich and others maintain, and (*b*) that more than fifty percent of academic errors make little or no difference to effective communication.

So if we "teachers" stopped pretending that we and our students should aim at perfection, and concentrated on positive joyful putting over of ideas, then—to adopt Schumacher's terms—we could have appropriate terminology. After all, words are our tools, and small is easy to handle.

Sincerely, from Africa (always something new—and newsy!)

Fredrick Bennett

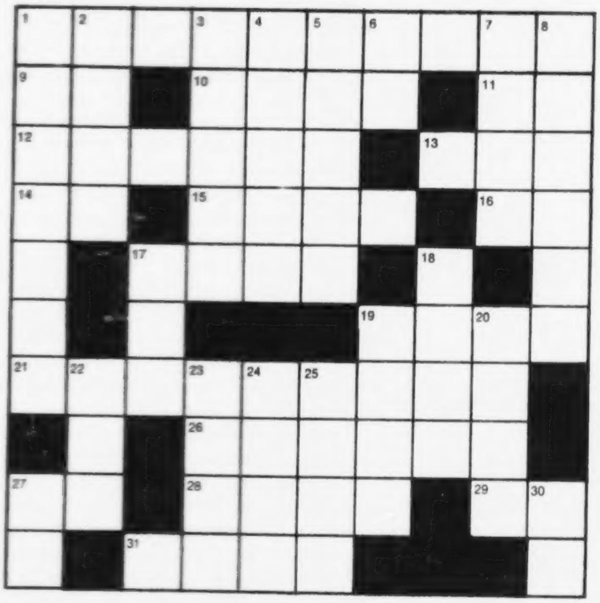
The Editor Replies

We're sorry to say we apparently never received the "letter with some practical suggestions"; our files yield no trace of it.

The last paragraph in the above letter provides just one of the many indications that have come to us lately of an interest in moving away from the study (or perfecting) of language structures for their own sake and toward a much greater interest in the *content* (ideas, concepts, etc.) expressed in and through the language. Clearly, there is need for precision and correctness in language for the sake of accuracy of communication (as well as, for some, artistic considerations); nevertheless, this emphasis on language as a vehicle for the communication of ideas (hardly a new idea itself!) seems to be opening up new approaches and suggesting new emphases in the teaching of English in many quarters. An idea whose time has come?

"The Lighter Side"

Theme: Seven Continents



ACROSS

1 Coldest continent
9 Missouri (abbr.)
10 Brave; confident
11 Preposition
12 Continent
13 Organ of hearing
14 Registered nurse (abbr.)
15 Intensifier
16 Eleven (Roman numeral)
17 Table for writing or studying
19 Sodium bicarbonate; carbonated water; soft drink
21 Island continent
26 Without difficulty; with facility; in a smooth, free manner
27 Ist person pronoun
28 Dry; lacking moisture; parched by heat
29 Thus, in the same manner or way; to a great extent or degree
31 Region; extent of space or surface; scope

DOWN

1 Second word of two continents
2 Part of speech
3 Over; on top of; higher than
4 Heavy cords; twisted or braided strands of fiber
5 An office worker who keeps accounts and records; a salesperson in a store or shop
6 Touchdown (abbr.)
7 Persuade by kindness, patience, or flattery
8 Second largest continent
17 Negative prefix
18 Bubble up; reach the temperature where a liquid changes to gas
19 Past tense of *slide*
20 24-hour periods
22 Employ, utilize
23 Pull apart or to pieces; damage by pulling sharply; drop of salty water coming from the eye
24 Unusual; uncommon; not often occurring
25 Largest continent
27 Possessive pronoun
30 Correlative of *either*; function word used to indicate an alternative

Solution appears elsewhere in this issue.

CITY ANAGRAMS

In each sentence the omitted word is a synonym of the word or phrase in parentheses, and is also an anagram of a city described by the sentence. (That is, the missing word and the city are made up of the same letters arranged in different order.)

1. Every time Mr. Smith goes to Italy, he enjoys himself _ _ _ _ (a greater amount). _ _ _ _

2. When he travels to Norway, he prefers to travel _ _ _ _ (alone). _ _ _ _

3. The tourists traveled in _ _ _ _ _ (twos) on a guided tour of France. _ _ _ _ _

4. Even a _ _ _ _ _ (person who hoards wealth) might be tempted to pay for a tour to that famous cathedral city in France. _ _ _ _ _

5. So many clients signed up for the group flight to southern Italy that two _ _ _ _ _ _ (aircraft) were chartered. _ _ _ _ _ _

6. Some of the group flight's _ _ _ _ _ (single parts that are constituents of a whole) made a stopover in North Africa. _ _ _ _ _

7. One passenger was considered an _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (ungrateful person) by the others because he insisted on stopping over at another North African city. _ _ _ _ _ _ _

8. Another chartered plane was leaving for South America with a cargo of important _ _ _ _ (postal matter). _ _ _ _

9. If you want to visit the "cradle of civilization" in Greece, you had better _ _ _ _ _ _ (hurry) to make your reservations. _ _ _ _ _ _

10. Visitors to the West Indian island of _ _ _ _ _ _ (with Trinidad, an independent state) often go on to this city in the northern Andes. _ _ _ _ _ _

Adapted from *Can You Solve It?* by Gerard Mosler (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1965). Used by permission.

GEOGRAPHICAL RIDDLES

1. Which was the largest island before Australia was discovered?
2. What is it that is found in the very center of America and Australia?
3. What part of London is in France?
4. What continent do you see when you look in the mirror in the morning?
5. What's the difference between the North Pole and the South Pole?

ANSWERS

City Anagrams: 1. more—Rome 2. solo—Oslo 3. pairs—Paris 4. miser—Reims 5. planes—Naples 6. units—Tunis 7. ingrate—Tangier 8. mail—Lima 9. hasten—Athens 10. Tobago—Bogotá

Geographical Riddles: 1. Australia (it was the largest island even before it was discovered) 2. The letter R 3. The letter N 4. Europe (you see *you're up*) 5. All the difference in the world

Addendum

The following biographical information was received too late for inclusion with C.J. Koster's article on page 42 of this issue:

C.J. Koster is a lecturer in the Department of Applied Linguistics at the Free University in Amsterdam. He has taught English at various levels, and was a guest lecturer at Satya Wacana University, Salatiga, Indonesia, in 1972 and 1975. He has written a number of articles on TEFL and is author of an introductory book on English syntactic analysis and coauthor of a book in Dutch on teaching in the language laboratory. Mr. Koster is at present engaged in research into the various strategies employed by foreign-language learners when listening to speech in a foreign language.

Acknowledgments

"Individualizing the Lower-Level Composition Class," by Linda Lonon Blanton, was originally presented, in a slightly different version, as a paper at the 1977 NAFSA Region V Conference, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

"The Relative Clause as a Creative Tool," by Sandra L. Schnell-Doubleday, was first presented at the Eighth Annual Conference of the Association of Professors of English in Iran (APEI) held in Mashad in March 1978.

In accordance with the copyright law effective 1 January 1978, any article in this issue *not attributed to another source, either in the acknowledgments above or elsewhere in these pages*, may be reprinted if permission to do so is obtained from the author. Permission to reprint articles from another source must be obtained from the original publisher.

The ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM, a quarterly journal for the teacher of English outside the United States, is provided by the Embassy of the United States of America located in the country of distribution. Occasional copies and regular subscriptions are available through the Embassy.

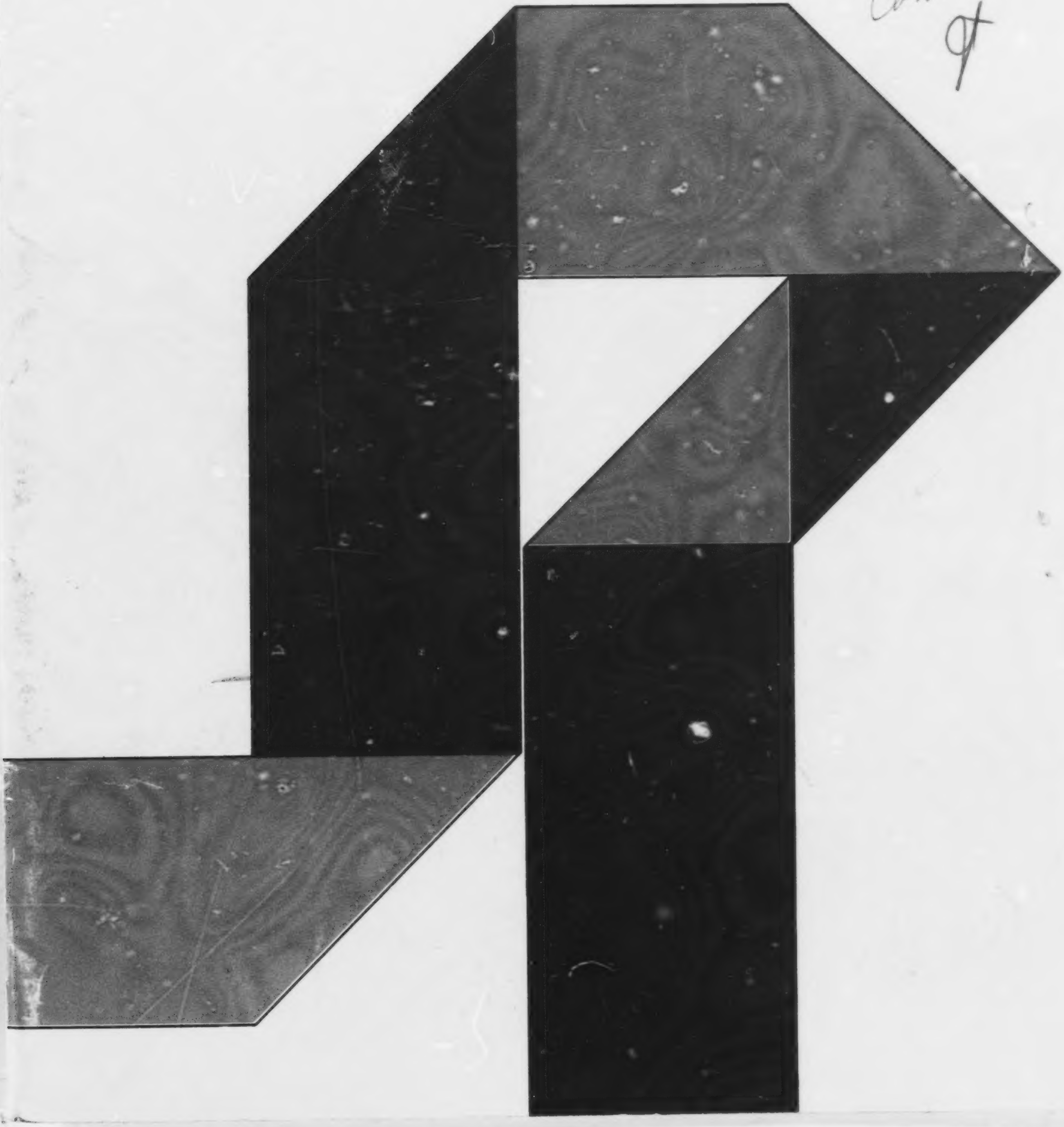
Manuscripts and letters to the editor should be sent to Room 708, 1717 H Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20547. To be considered for publication, manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced with margins of at least three centimeters. Questions about subscriptions should be addressed to the American Embassy in the capital city of the country in which the inquirer resides. Requests for subscriptions should *not* be sent to the editor.

NOV 1980
Survey 80-27
472-F
ICA 1.11: 18/3
414
8973
Contin ¢

FORUM

ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM
A JOURNAL FOR THE TEACHER OF ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

Volume XVIII Number 3 July 1980



Editorial

ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS

It is reported that on her deathbed Gertrude Stein asked, "What is the answer?" Receiving no reply, she said, "In that case, what is the question?"

Education in general, and language teaching in particular, have long been concerned with questions and answers. Often, in English language teaching, the emphasis has been (quite understandably, in view of the changes in word order, intonation patterns, etc.) more on the *form* of the question than on its content. In our last issue we mentioned, editorially, the growing interest in improving the informative content of course material, so that it contains more substantial answers to more meaningful questions.

Several of the quotations accompanying Alan McLean's article in this issue (especially the final four) bring to mind other aspects of the question-and-answer relationship in education. Perhaps the most obvious of these is the assumption that learning takes place just in the proportion that the information supplied provides a direct answer to the learner's own questions (asked or unasked)—that is, to his intrinsic desire to know. The relationship of this view to the teacher's ever-present concern with "motivation" is obvious enough. Information that the student perceives as inherently important to him must provide a more "real" motivation to learn than does information that simply helps him to meet an academic or occupational need, and certainly must be far more effective than the all too frequent negative motivation that drives a student to learn for the sake of avoiding punishment of some sort, whether in the form of social or personal disapproval, loss of self-esteem through failure, pressures to meet school requirements, or whatever.

A more crucial question for the teacher,however, is suggested especially by the quotation from Blakemore: "True knowledge, Plato argues, must be within us all, and learning consists solely of discovering what we already know." Without getting into the question of the comparative merits of opposing theories, we might do well to consider the implications of the two essentially opposite views of the learner brought to mind by the above question: (1) as one who must be helped to discover what he already knows; (2) as an empty receptacle for knowledge (to be poured in by the teacher).

It is the province of the educational theorist to come to some sort of conclusion pro or con these conflicting theories. It is the province of the teacher, however, to do the best possible job for his students from an enlightened understanding of both the science and art of his teaching. If the *science* requires him to have as clear a knowledge as possible of the theoretical underpinnings of teaching practices, the *art* of teaching demands a pragmatic approach that takes into account all the variable factors of his and his students' situation—factors not necessarily accounted for in learning theories. This means that he must put together his own unique combination of techniques suggested by differing theories. (For the most effective teaching this combination must be so individual that it may in fact vary significantly from one class to another of the same teacher.) The idealistic view that holds the learner capable of discovering what he already knows should lead the teacher to fresh, adventurous approaches that engage the interest and imagination of the learner, awakening him to the joy of discovery, of finding answers within himself—which, in turn, may enhance his self-image and whet his desire for learning. On the other hand, the teacher will recognize the practical necessity of certain elements of the "pouring information in" approach, as dictated by considerations of economy of time, cultural and individual expectations, syllabus requirements, etc. The teacher may thus steer a careful course between the Scylla of an unbridled idealism and the Charybdis of a ploddingly pedestrian approach, thus avoiding both the eddies of unrealistic zeal and the shallows of uninspired mechanistic drillwork.

The constant danger, it seems to us, on the part of zealous proponents of any one learning theory is that they tend to mistake what may be a very useful facet of the ultimate truth for The Answer. This often results in a narrow, exclusivist approach which eschews any practice not included in, or completely compatible with, their particular theory. Their opponents, on the other hand, may be equally guilty in refusing to enrich their own outlook by acknowledging whatever elements of the "new" theory may enhance the total learning picture.

Fortunately, the average enlightened classroom teacher (and our mail reveals that enlightenment is a characteristic daily becoming more common) tends to be confidently and consistently pragmatic in his approach to his work. Considering our present ignorance of what learning really is and how it is attained, as well as the countless variables that may be beyond the teacher's control, this middle road of pragmatism seems for most of us a fair highway indeed.

—A.C.N.

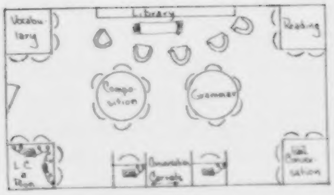
FORUM

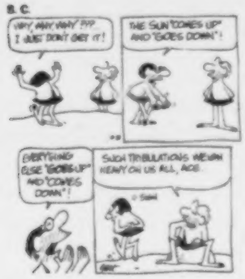
ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM
A JOURNAL FOR THE TEACHER OF ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

No rec'd when July [illegible] rec'd

3371

Ms. Skinner
sub. started w/ July issue 1980.
rec'd May!




B.C.
WHY, WHY, WHY ??? I JUST DON'T GET IT!
THE SUN "COMES UP" AND "GOES DOWN"!
EVERYTHING ELSE "GOES UP" AND "COMES DOWN"!
SUCH TRIBULATIONS WEIGH HEAVY ON US ALL, ACE.

Integrating Group Work with the Teaching of Grammar — 2
MARIANNE CELCE-MURCIA, *University of California, Los Angeles*

Opening the Language Lab — 4
COURTENAY S. CHADWELL, *Yap Department of Education, Federated States of Micronesia*

Ten Rules for Adult Second-Language Learners — 6
RICHARD SHOWSTACK, *English Academy Ryugakukai, Tokyo*

What We Learned by Using the Silent Way — 9
T. TODD DIEMER and OPART PANYA, *Chombung Village Teachers College, Thailand*

Time-Tense Alignment Exercises: A Dramatic Treatment of Verb Tenses — 13
PETER L. McGUIRE, *Technical University of Wrocław*

Destroying the Teacher: The Need for Learner-Centered Teaching — 16
ALAN C. McLEAN, *Resource and Development Unit, Longman Group*

Speedwriting: A Technique for Improving Writing Fluency — 20
DIANA CLARKE, *American University Alumni Language Center, Chiangmai, Thailand* and
DIANNE WALKER, *Chinese University of Hong Kong*

Language, Communication, and Human Needs: A Look at Second Language and Rhetoric Programs — 22
MAURICE IMHOOF and MARY MURPHY, *The American University in Cairo*

Putting Variety Into Dictation — 28
THOMAS M. SPEER, *King Faisal University*

A Paper-Scrap Approach to Internalizing Language Structures — 31
KIM HAENG JUNG, *Choong Nam Girls' High School, Korea*

Oral Fluency Training and Small Groups — 36
NORMAN F. DAVIES, *University of Linköping, Sweden*

NEWS AND IDEAS

Burma. Developing Reading Comprehension: More Useful Exercises, THI-HA — 40
Colombia. A Four-Day Immersion Experience, FRANK P. RUTTER — 41
Greece. Group Work: The Road towards Reality, E.J. KRIGAS — 42
Iran. Self-Correction of Compositions: The Three Pencil Method, JOHN SIVELL — 42
Mexico. First Encounters in a Language Classroom, JODY WILLIAMS — 43
Romania. The Man that Works Wonders: The Stickman, GABRIELLA GHEORGHIU — 45
United States. Stemgo: A Word Stems Game, CHRIS BERNBROCK — 45
Yugoslavia. What Grammar Should We Teach?, MIŠESKA OLGA TOMIĆ — 46

LETTERS

Sri Lanka. A Pen-Friends Club, M. NAEEM — 47
THE LIGHTER SIDE — 48

Volume XVIII
July 1980
Number 3

Anne Covell Newton
Editor

Jodi Lynn Thompson
Editorial Assistant

Acknowledgments and copyright notices appear inside back cover or with copyrighted item

Cover design by Clare Stober

80-192 (50)

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402

Integrating Group Work with the Teaching of Grammar

MARIANNE CELCE-MURCIA
University of California, Los Angeles

Marianne Celce-Murcia is associate professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she has taught English as a second language since 1972. She has also served as lecturer in English at the Federal Advanced Teachers College, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria, and as a research linguist and systems analyst for the System Development Corporation, in Santa Monica, California. Her publications include articles in a number of professional journals, chapters in anthologies, and a book, *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1979), of which she is co-editor with Lois McIntosh. She is currently preparing, with Diane Larsen-Freeman, an introduction to English grammar for ESL teachers (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, forthcoming).

For some time ESL teachers have been using the group-work technique because it helps to establish a good classroom climate. In fact, two current innovative language-teaching methods—Curran's Counseling-Learning (1972, 1976) and Gattegno's Silent Way (1972)—are totally group-oriented. In many classes group work has been used occasionally to stimulate oral communication centered around problem-solving or role-playing tasks (see Rosensweig 1974). It has also been used as a pre-writing activity and for peer correction of compositions (see Witbeck 1976).

Four arguments frequently cited in favor of using the group technique are:

1. With a congenial environment that encourages student-student interaction—not just teacher-student interaction—more learning takes place.

2. Many students who will not participate in a conventional class setting will tend to join in better in small groups composed of peers.

3. Students often accept explanations, corrections, and suggestions from peers more readily than from the teacher.

4. Students should be made responsible for their own learning.

Rationale

There are several reasons for my integrating the teaching of grammar and the group-work technique in my classes with academically oriented students at the high-intermediate or advanced level. First of all, the course syllabus is very full: reading, vocabulary, grammar, composition, and study skills are all taught; also, class time is limited to five hours per week, and an academic quarter is only ten weeks. Secondly, priority is given to problems in written work, since the students' oral communication is usually adequate, and their written errors seem more glaring and obvious than their spoken errors. In addition, I feel that written errors are easier for these students to learn to monitor and correct than errors they commit in speech. Finally, I believe that the group-work technique achieves three important goals: (1) it creates a good social climate with opportunities for student-student interaction; (2) it contributes to the remediation of some persistent grammatical errors; and (3) it gives the students the tools they need to continue improving their English after they have completed the course.

Procedure

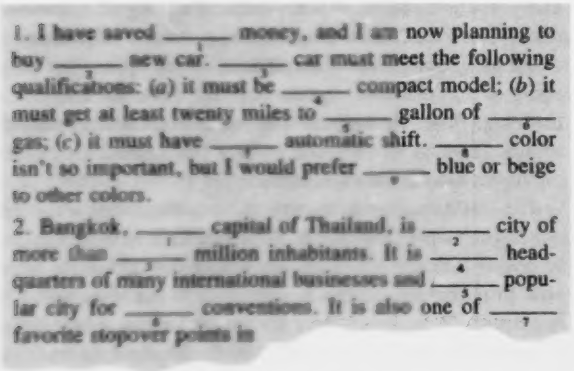
The procedure that I follow is described and illustrated with sample materials below:

Step 1. Identify a common problem (for example, article usage).

Step 2. Conduct a conventional review. (This could be a brief lecture or a reading assignment—for example, study chapters 10 and 11 in Danielson and Hayden [1973].)

Step 3. Distribute take-home exercises. (The following is taken from Danielson and Hayden [1973], p. 131. Exercises adapted or taken from existing texts are usually adequate at this stage if they are contextualized.)

Fill in the blanks with a/an/some/the. *If an article is not needed, leave the space blank.*



1. I have saved $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{1}$ money, and I am now planning to buy $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{2}$ new car. $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{3}$ car must meet the following qualifications: (*a*) it must be $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{4}$ compact model; (*b*) it must get at least twenty miles to $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{5}$ gallon of $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{6}$ gas; (*c*) it must have $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{7}$ automatic shift. $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{8}$ color isn't so important, but I would prefer $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{9}$ blue or beige to other colors.

2. Bangkok, $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{1}$ capital of Thailand, is $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{2}$ city of more than $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{3}$ million inhabitants. It is $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{4}$ headquarters of many international businesses and $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{5}$ popular city for $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{6}$ conventions. It is also one of $\underline{\hspace{3em}}_{7}$ favorite stopover points in

Step 4. The teacher prepares the class for group work. Going over ten sample items with the whole class gives the students some idea of how to correct and how to interact during their group exercise.[1]

Step 5. Group work (four or five students per group)

a. Students compare their responses and discuss items if there is disagreement. Then they record the group's consensus.

b. They give the teacher their consensus answers on a clean exercise sheet that the teacher has given to the recorder in each group.

Step 6. The teacher corrects group responses.

a. Gives feedback to the entire class.

b. Pinpoints residual problems and provides some oral drills to practice the correct forms.

Step 7. Follow-up written exercises dealing with residual problems. (For the lesson on article usage, I distributed a composition that I had made up. It incorporated most of the residual errors, and each student was asked to correct the errors in article usage as homework.)

Step 8. Group work (as in Step 5, with Step 4 as preparation, if necessary).

Step 9. Teacher corrects (as in Step 6) with more grammar drill on a few points if necessary.

Step 10. The students write their next composition, focusing on accuracy in article usage.

a. Students are given time to recheck their compositions for errors in article usage.

b. The teacher gives special attention to article usage in grading the composition.

Step 11. Articles are later tested along with other points of grammar as part of a larger quiz or examination.

Discussion

There are a number of important considerations involved in implementing such a procedure. First of all, to ensure its effectiveness, students must complete their written exercises before coming to class. The teacher should check quickly for completion of work and penalize those who have come unprepared before setting up the groups.

Secondly, to ensure efficient group work, the class as a whole should simulate the group correction process with a written exercise under the teacher's guidance. The teacher should set up the groups in advance, and each group should have an assigned leader and recorder. (This assignment changes each time so that all students do these jobs.) Moreover, the teacher will have prepared small signs to post in the areas where group work will be done—each sign indicates the membership of the group and designates the leader and the recorder. (This saves time and avoids confusion.)[2] Furthermore, it is best if the composition of the group changes from one session to another so that students have optimum exposure to each other in small, cordial groups. By judiciously assigning membership in the groups the teacher can keep certain students apart if this should be desirable.

Like any other good procedure or activity, group work can be overused. Students get annoyed or bored if put too frequently into small groups; then all of the advantages associated with doing group work are eliminated. Group work must be used as one of several learning situations: (*a*) the teacher with the whole class, (*b*) each student doing a task independently, (*c*) one or more students in charge of the whole class, (*d*) students working in pairs, etc. The teacher must also be careful to pace group work so that it doesn't drag. A reasonable amount of time for completion of the group's task should be specified before the group work starts. The teacher should move around the class to see how the groups are progressing and should urge them to speed up if they are moving too slowly.

There are pros and cons to using such a procedure even if it is used with optimum frequency and paced properly. The obvious advantages are that most students enjoy such an interactional approach to learning grammar and that the teacher corrects four or five exercises instead of twenty to twenty-five. The most convincing argument in favor of the procedure, however, is that most students demonstrate marked improvement in later compositions and on quizzes/exams.

One of the disadvantages is that group work requires a lot of preparation time for the teacher. In addition, there are always a few students who don't like group work (loners and those who for social or cultural reasons won't learn from peers). And I'm sorry to have to report that some stu-

continued on page 19

---

[1] I am grateful to Chris Bernbrock, a teaching assistant at UCLA, who added this step to the procedure and who reported its usefulness to me.

[2] This sign-posting procedure was first suggested and used by a former UCLA teaching assistant, Jennifer Van Schaik.

Opening the Language Lab

COURTENAY S. CHADWELL
*Yap Department of Education,
Federated States of Micronesia*

Courtenay S. Chadwell is District Oral English Specialist for the Yap Department of Education, Federated States of Micronesia. She has also worked with the Community College of Micronesia, training teachers in English and TESL techniques. She previously served as academic director of the Pacific English Language Institute, in San Luis Obispo, California, where, in addition to her administrative and teaching duties, she designed and implemented an "alternative" language laboratory based on the open classroom model. Along with her preparation in TEFL, Mrs. Chadwell brings to her work a rich and varied background in the arts and humanities, especially theater, dance, and foreign languages.

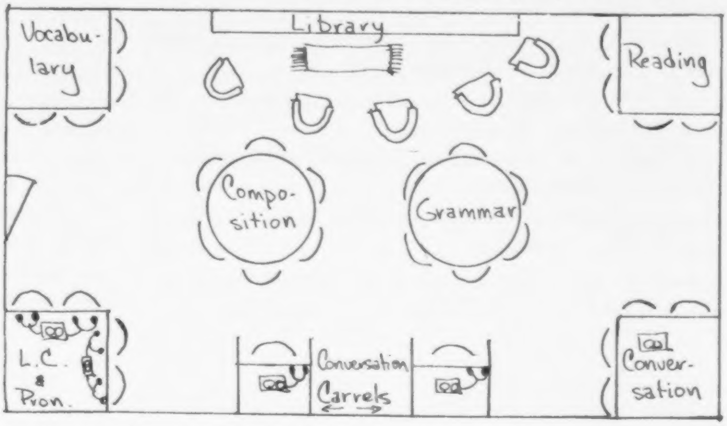
The traditional language laboratory, with a central monitoring station and rows of booths containing earphones, is one of the most tedious aspects of foreign language learning. Even the most avid language student is filled with boredom in the clutches of the lab. Too many students spend too many hours slumped in the booths, thinking of something other than the material they are supposed to be practicing, doing assignments for other classes, or sleeping, but managing to produce rote utterances in the event the monitor is listening. The mechanical atmosphere soon loses its intrigue. The lack of personal contact has a deadening effect on the motivation of most students.

The traditional system may serve a function in an area where the target language is not spoken. It is then a means of oral practice that the learner would not otherwise have, and, provided the student has the will to use it earnestly, it is helpful. In an area where the target language is spoken, however, I believe it serves little or no function. In this situation the student can be encouraged or required to practice speaking with native speakers outside of class. In either case the effectiveness of this type of lab is threatened, if not negated, by its inherent monotony and its limited scope. It is designed to treat a particular aspect of language learning, using a method which, for many students, simply does not work.

An "open" language lab

The time and expense spent on the traditional laboratory could be applied to an alternative system that would stimulate, rather than deaden, the students' interest in the language. The laboratory I have designed is based on the open classroom model. This system can be used by any age level, from preschool to college and adult, and by any language level or combined levels. It can also accommodate a heterolingual group. And it can be implemented at less expense than the traditional lab.

As with any open classroom, there are various stations that the students visit. The younger the students, the more visually interesting the stations should be. In this design there are six stations; some of these could be combined and/or others added. Below is a floor plan; let's take a tour.



Visiting the six stations

We first come to the Listening Comprehension & Pronunciation Station. Tapes are essential for this station. Listening comprehension tapes include minimal pairs and minimal sentences. For more advanced students there are taped anecdotes, paragraphs, and lectures, the comprehension of which must be demonstrated in either written or spoken form. Pronunciation tapes produce utterances for the students to mimic. The type of tape that allows for student response (which can be taped over without erasing the model) allows the student's work to be checked later. A Language Master is very helpful for pronunciation and listening comprehension practice.[1] Written words, sentences, and paragraphs can also be used for pronunciation work; blank tapes should be provided for this type of practice so that the students, as well as the teacher, can listen and check their pronunciation.

The Conversation Station is arranged to accommodate practice by a single student, or by a pair or small group. Alone, a student can talk about one of the pictures provided for this purpose or choose one of the suggested impromptu speech topics. Or s/he can work with a tape containing one voice of a telephone conversation or an interview. A pair or group of students can choose a card presenting a situation to be role-played. Or they can finish a conversation of which the first part is presented on tape or on a card. They can debate an issue, or interview each other. All practice at this station should be taped for later listening.

The Grammar Station is much like traditional language lab work. There are taped exercises—repetition, substitution, and transformation drills—to practice what has been presented previously in class. There are also written exercises to review class work.

The Reading Station contains two sections. One section is concerned with reading skills. Given short readings, the students complete written exercises that test comprehension, grasp of the central idea, and speed. For beginning students, pictures are used to test comprehension.

The other section is a library. All students are encouraged to do some free reading each week. A period of time is designated for reading. Books at appropriate levels, magazines, newspapers, and comics have been collected for the library.

At the Composition Station there are different types of exercises for different levels of proficiency. For young students, or those for whom the target writing system is new, there are handwriting exercises. For intermediate students there are controlled composition exercises (such as changing a paragraph from third person to first, or from present to past tense). For more advanced students there are story starters, pictures to be described, letters to be answered, and ideas for business letters to be written. There are also paragraph-writing exercises, and ideas for themes and essays.

Our final stop is the Vocabulary Station. Here there are word-building exercises that give practice in affixes and root meanings. There are exercises and games to practice antonyms and synonyms. Definition exercises differ according to level: lower-level students can identify pictures, or choose the correct description of what is happening in a picture; higher-level students can determine a definition from a word's context. There are also games at this station—word games, such as crossword puzzles and jumbled words, and board games, such as Scrabble, Probe, etc. And there are dictionaries and thesauri.

These six stations cover what I consider to be basic needs of a foreign- or second-language program. As I mentioned earlier, some of these stations could be combined or redefined. A teacher might feel more comfortable combining reading and vocabulary, and want a separate Games Station. Other stations could be added. For example, a Cross-Cultural Station or a Study Skills Station might be desired. Or a Newspaper Station would be helpful at a school publishing a student newspaper. There are also many more possibilities for materials, which can be made or purchased.

An operational system

Once the stations are defined and the materials for each obtained, an operational system must be established. I have found the following system to work well.

On the first day, each student is given a folder for completed exercises. A record sheet, also kept in the folder, allows space for the date, station, exercise(s) completed, and points given for each exercise. Two points are given for each exercise done well, one point for each done satisfactorily, and none for those done poorly.

In most classrooms, the teacher needs to set up some guidelines. I require students to visit each station every week. Once a student has completed an exercise at each station, he may choose any activity he likes. The required stations may be visited in any order the student wishes. (Limited equipment would perhaps necessitate a schedule for certain stations.) Some teachers may wish to control which exercises the students should do at each station. I have found that the suggestion that a certain exercise is too easy or too difficult (usually the former) is sufficient guidance. In determining the minimum amount of weekly work, it is essential that slower students be given enough time to complete the basic requirement. Faster students will have time to use on extra work.

Students may receive requests from any of their regular class teachers to do certain exercises at particular stations. This allows the lab time to be used for necessary review or extra practice by those who need it. A teacher may even request that a homework assignment be rewritten at, say, the Grammar Station.

continued on page 15

---

[1] Editor's Note: A Language Master is a small machine in which one may insert a card with a length of magnetic tape, on which prerecorded items may be listened to as the card goes through the machine. The student may also record his repetition of the model utterance on the card, which he can then reinsert and listen to, comparing his response with the model. The card can also be written or drawn on, or attached to a picture.

Ten Rules for Adult Second-Language Learners

RICHARD SHOWSTACK
English Academy Ryugakukai, Tokyo

Richard Showstack teaches English in Tokyo and serves as director of cultural and educational affairs for English Academy Ryugakukai. He holds degrees in humanities and psychology from the University of California and a master's degree in TEFL from San Francisco State University. Mr. Showstack has studied three foreign languages for a total of over ten years and has taught English as a foreign language in three countries for more than five years.

There is increasing emphasis in language teaching on a "focus on the learner," on "learner-centered teaching," and on "individualizing foreign language instruction." At the same time, there is a growing sophistication in the way language teachers are trained. What has *not* received adequate attention, however, is the question of what is necessary to be a good language *learner*. Unfortunately, no SSL (Students of a Second Language) training programs have been developed to prepare students for the arduous but important task of studying and learning a second language.

The thesis of this article is that even a short period of training in *how to study and learn a second language*, given to students at the beginning of their study, can have as great an influence on their success in learning the language as the training given to their teacher in *how to teach a second language*. After all, most teachers are experienced, and familiar with the target language and with ways to teach it, whereas most beginning language students are, by definition, neither familiar with the language nor experienced in how to study it.

Some students can learn a language without good study habits, and others may have acquired language-learning skills from earlier experience. But those students who are poor language learners to begin with, and who do not learn *how* to learn a second language, may be left far behind. The need and desire of the poor language learners may be every bit as great as the need and desire of the inherently good language learners, but because they do not know how to learn a foreign language (and nobody bothers to teach them) they may fail at the task.

Why should the poor learners be penalized for not knowing something that nobody ever tried to teach them and which nobody told them they should know? Students need not only guidance, drills, and approval; they also deserve to be told when and how they are wasting their time and how to correct the situation. An experienced teacher who is sensitive to his students' needs will not only insist that they do what is necessary to learn the language; he will also teach them how to do it. It is a disservice to the students, as well as an abdication of the teacher's responsibility, to emphasize student-centered learning under conditions of greater freedom without defining for the students the responsibilities and skills they must acquire to successfully plan and accomplish the language-learning task. The teacher, after all, has only a general influence over the students' study habits, while each student has direct control over his own learning process. Isn't it sensible to take some time to train the students to learn as well as training the teacher to teach?

TEN RULES

I propose a list of ten areas that the language teacher should discuss with his adult students at the beginning of their study, and which they can refer to later if problems arise. This list might even be revised into a kind of learning (and teaching) contract in which teacher and students recognize, acknowledge, and agree on their mutual responsibilities in the language-learning process.

1. At the beginning of his language study, the student should examine his answers to several questions:

a. Why do I want to learn the foreign language?
b. How do I want to use the language?
c. What exactly do I want to learn, and how must I go about learning it?
d. Would I rather study a language or do something else with my time?

Too often the student does not have a clear idea of what he wants or needs to learn in order to achieve his language-learning goal (if indeed he has a clear idea of what that goal is). He should first examine his motivation for studying the language and then ask himself: "In what way, concretely and specifically, do I want to use my knowledge of this language?"

Then he should examine the implications of his answers to the first two questions and ask himself: "What should I emphasize in my language study, and what must I do to achieve my goals? Should I study vocabulary and reading? writing? speaking? And what, exactly, can I do inside and outside of class to learn these things?" Too often, beginning language learners—and too many teachers—have only a vague idea of the implications of these questions and the answers to them.

The point is that you cannot just "learn a language." Either the teacher or the student (ideally both) must decide what aspect of the language to emphasize first and how it should be learned. Both immediate and long-range benefits would no doubt be greater if practical areas were emphasized first and more esoteric ones later.

Finally, the student should ask himself: "How important to me is my language-learning goal and how hard am I willing to work to achieve it? Would I rather be doing something else right now than studying the foreign language?" If the answer to the latter question is "Yes," the student may be wasting not only his own time but that of the teacher and other students as well. If the answer is "No," the student should be prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to learn the language. The student should understand from the beginning both the potential rewards and the necessary effort involved in learning a second language.

2. A related question that the student should ask himself is: "Do I want to learn *about* the language or do I want to learn *to use* the language?" Learning a language is more than merely acquiring knowledge; it is a matter of developing and maintaining a skill through practice. *You cannot say you have learned a foreign language if you cannot use it*. You will learn to use it only by using it in real-life situations, and you will never learn it if you spend all of your time outside of class speaking your native language.

3. A teacher cannot teach you a language; you have to learn it. Various studies have shown that a student's motivation is at least as important a factor in his success in learning a language as the particular methodology or materials the teacher uses or the number of hours spent in the classroom. If it is really important for the student to learn the language, he should find opportunities to use the language outside the classroom. He can read books, magazines, and newspapers in the foreign language; he can attend movies and lectures in the language; he can offer to exchange language lessons with native speakers of the language or become involved with clubs or organizations that have activities related to the country where the language is spoken; he can show foreign visitors around his city or take part in exchange programs between his own country and a foreign country.

Learning a language is not a matter of transferring knowledge from the mind of a teacher to the minds of the students. The teacher's time should be devoted to those aspects of the teaching-learning process which only he can provide during the limited time spent in the classroom. He can direct the study of the students, provide emotional, cultural, and sociolinguistic insights into the use of the language, help the students pace their learning, and monitor (test) their progress to let them know how well they are doing. But the students should not waste the teacher's time and their own by asking the teacher to do what the students should (and can) do on their own. In learning the content of the foreign language, the students can, in most cases, teach each other as well as a teacher can teach them. (In fact, about ninety percent of what goes on in most foreign language classrooms could be accomplished as well or better by the students either working by themselves with individualized learning materials, or working with other students or tutors in pairs.)

4. The student should not expect the teacher always to be able to explain why the language behaves in a certain way. If a language seems to lack logic or behave in an arbitrary way, the student should understand that this is the result of many different forces acting over thousands of years. The teacher should not be expected to have an instant remedy for every bit of confusion the students suffer while learning new aspects of the language. Nor should the student expect there to be just one right answer to every question or exercise in the foreign language. Words have different meanings in different contexts; there are different ways to say the same thing; and different native speakers (including teachers and textbook writers) may use slightly different versions of the language.

5. The student should not expect to learn the language in one year. In fact, he should not expect to *ever* finish studying the language. If he studies hard for three years, he may be able to have an intelligent conversation with a native speaker of the language. If he studies for six years, he may be able to take part in such a conversation *comfortably*, but he will never reach a point where he knows the foreign language so well that he will stop learning new things. And he will never know it as well as a native speaker.

Perhaps we should stop using the phrase "to learn a language," for how many people ever completely master a foreign language—especially those who begin their study as adults? Adult students should not set their hopes too high or choose unrealistic goals; on the other hand, they should not become discouraged if they do not progress as fast as they had hoped. Nor should they wait until they know the language "perfectly" before they try to use it in real-life situations. And since they will never finish their study of the language, they should concentrate on learning it *well* instead of learning it quickly.

6. The student should not ignore the "little" mistakes he makes in the foreign language; at the same time, he should not be afraid to make lots of mistakes. Many beginning language students think they will concentrate on correcting the "big" (important) mistakes they make in using the foreign language and let the "little" (unimportant) ones take care of themselves. This is one result of their desire to learn the language quickly instead of learning it well. But how can anyone tell the difference between a "big" mistake and a "little" one when first learning a foreign language? What may seem like a "little" mistake to a beginning language student may not seem little to a native speaker of the language. And little mistakes do not automatically correct themselves. If they are "little," they should be corrected immediately. This will also help to avoid acquiring habits that will be hard to unlearn later.

At the same time, the best language learners are probably those who make the most mistakes. They are not afraid to try new words, to speak out, to test their hypotheses about the new language. To learn a new language, the student must practice, and the more he practices, the more mistakes he is likely to make. The secret is to recognize one's mistakes and correct them. As the poet Piet Hein has written, the secret to success is to "err and err and err again, but less and less and less."

7. Language and culture are inseparable. All languages are meaningful only in a context, and the culture is one of the most important aspects of the context in which a language is spoken. Therefore, to accept the task of learning a foreign language means also to accept the task of learning something about the culture where it is spoken. Just as language is a key to a foreign culture, so the culture is a key to the language. They should be learned together.

8. The teacher should recognize that cultural and communicative problems cannot be separated from language-learning problems, but the student should not expect the teacher to solve all of these problems for him. Naturally, the teacher should be sensitive to the students' personal problems. And nobody knows better than the language teacher what problems can develop for someone who is struggling to learn a new language and a new culture at the same time. It is the teacher's responsibility, in this situation, to help the students learn the cultural values necessary to use the language successfully. However, students who are learning the language while living in the foreign culture must start using the language to solve their problems instead of expecting the teacher to do this for them. They must take the initiative to practice their new language skills by using the language as much as possible outside the classroom.

9. The student, not the teacher, is the one who will ultimately benefit or suffer because of the way he studies the language. Most teachers are sincerely interested in doing whatever they feel is necessary to help their students learn the language, and this often includes both entertaining them and being strict with them—as well as giving assignments, tests, or special tasks to perform. However, the structure of the educational system often forces the teacher into the role of taskmaster, and the students fall into the role of trying to satisfy the teacher instead of learning the language. Too often the classroom becomes an arena for a contest between the students and the teacher, with students trying to get away with doing as little work as possible while trying to convince the teacher that they have been studying and learning something. In the end it is the students who must determine their language-learning behavior, and suffer the consequences or reap the rewards thereof.

10. The student has a responsibility to the teacher, to the other students, and to himself. No matter how well the teacher relates to his students and their needs, the fact remains that the classroom is an artificial situation in which teacher and students do not share the same position or responsibilities. The limits and responsibilities of both teacher and students should be established and agreed upon as early as possible in the teacher-student relationship.

The students have a responsibility to help the teacher, just as the teacher has a responsibility to help the students. It is just as hard to teach a foreign language in front of a room full of students as it is for the students to sit in the classroom and study. Teachers need patient assistance as much as the students do.

Ten or twenty or thirty or more students in a room with one teacher is an unnatural situation which will inevitably be uncomfortable and uninteresting at times, and everyone will have to sacrifice a little for the good of the group. The students have a responsibility to help one another learn, and in order to do this, the individual student should put the good of the group above his own needs, not monopolizing the class time nor doing anything that impedes the progress of the class.

Finally, the student has a responsibility to himself. He owes it to himself to make a worthwhile effort to learn the language, by organizing his studies, making a schedule, finding a place and the time to study, finding opportunities to use the language, and giving himself a chance to learn it. Before he can learn a foreign language, he must know how to learn.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me emphasize that this article is not a call for a return to an old-fashioned formal teacher-student relationship. Far from it! The trend toward increasing individualization of instruction is humanizing and makes sense educationally. Students deserve far greater freedom than they have been given in the past to take an active part in their educational process. But they must also accept the greater responsibilities that go with this freedom.

Perhaps teachers and students should be trained together in how to approach a foreign language. And perhaps the terms "language teaching" and "language learning" should be dropped altogether in favor of a broader approach to the problems of "language education." Student and teacher can share the responsibilities of language education, and both should understand the techniques, motivation, and efforts necessary to successfully teach and learn a foreign language.

What We Learned by Using the Silent Way

T. Todd Diemer and Opart Panya
Chombung Village Teachers College, Thailand

T. Todd Diemer is a graduate of the College of Education of Ohio State University, where he was particularly interested in ideas of freedom and independence as related to learning. His interest in young learners grew from his experiences at a primary school in Portland, Oregon. During his service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand he had an opportunity to bring together his ideas and the young learners, some of the results of which are indicated in the article on these pages. Mr. Diemer is continuing his study of learning processes and cross-cultural communication.

Opart Panya, a Thai, is an Assistant Project Officer in the Office of Rural Development, U.S. Agency for International Development. His teaching experience began in a primary school in a rural area of Thailand, where he taught for three years. After completing his B.A. degree at Prasarnit, the College of Education in Bangkok, he worked for the Mekhong Basin Development Committee in northeast Thailand for one year, after which he went to New Zealand to pursue studies leading to a TESL Certificate at the English Language Institute, Victoria University. Mr. Panya has worked in teacher training for two years, primarily in English teaching methodology.

The long-term purpose of our research was to train ourselves to teach an ordinary primary-school class using the Silent Way. In this article we describe some of the principles that we found essential to the Silent Way when we taught a sample class, and which we feel might also be useful to teachers using other techniques. We ourselves will certainly incorporate much of what we learned into our teaching, no matter what the particular situation may be.

Our background information and conclusions are drawn from four sources. First, direct experience studying a language using the Silent Way. Second, study and application of the principles in *The Common Sense of Teaching Foreign Languages*, by Caleb Gattegno. Third, related study of educational psychology, especially first-language acquisition theory, using *Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory to Practice*, by Kenneth Chastain. Fourth, the subject of this article: direct use of the Silent Way in teaching a model class.

Following is a description of the conditions of the model classroom and a list of the principles that stand out from our daily record of classroom sessions.

I. CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENT

For our research project we wanted students who had had no formal exposure to English, hoping thereby to avoid interference from other methods and also from bad language-learning habits. We recruited our students from families in our community, selecting three boys and three girls from nine to twelve years of age.

We used Silent Way sound charts (Fidels) and word charts. The sound charts list every sound that occurs in the English language. Every possible spelling of a given sound is listed in a column, and each sound column is given a specific and unique color. Each of the word charts contains about forty words, prearranged to fit the syllabus suggested in *Common Sense*. The words are printed in combinations of colors according to the sounds represented by the letters or groups of letters that form them (as on the Fidels). Thus the word *eight* has two colors, one for the sound *eigh* and another for the sound *t*.

The sound charts were placed on the wall directly in front of the students. We put the word charts up one at a time as the syllabus progressed. We also used a box of cuisinaire rods, colored blocks commonly used by mathematics teachers and also by some language teachers.

The duration of the project was three weeks, which included about forty-five hours of teaching time. We taught three to three and a half hours each day, six days a week. We had regular breaks, every twenty minutes or so.

We alternated as classroom teachers. The observing teacher took notes about the active teacher's performance. We evaluated the teaching performance after each day's lesson to see whether we were keeping to the guidelines of the method we were using, as set forth in *Common Sense*.

II. ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES

Teacher withdrawal

We reduced the traditional role of the teacher as the focus of classroom activity, limiting our function to that of forcing awareness and providing opportunity for practice.[1] We withdrew in four ways:

First, we did not repeat. The teacher gave only one model for each presentation, and the students then did the talking as they practiced. The teacher was active in silently directing some of the practice activities, but the teacher did not speak beyond the first introduction of a given model.

Second, we encouraged the students to direct some of the classroom activities. Students went to the charts and pointed out sounds or patterns suggested by the group. We encouraged students to manipulate the language pattern by manipulating the rods. They changed the sentences to indicate whether a rod was "here" or "there" or given to "her" or "me."

Third, in order to give our students maximum time to think and reason, we cast ourselves as only one possible authority available to correct mistakes. We pointed out the location of mistakes in patterns, but we offered our correction only as an optional and final step. First we sought self-correction. If this failed, we sought peer correction. The teacher entered to point out the proper sounds or words from the charts only if the first two approaches failed.

Fourth, we allowed the students to create and use language patterns that we had not introduced. We granted that "the learner must be given opportunities to develop language hypotheses and to test them against the language model."[2] Sometimes this did not lead to positive language production, but we accepted any pattern that accorded with proper usage, because we wanted to keep the opportunity open. For example, we introduced the sentence *I have a red rod and a green rod*. The students began to use this pattern: *I have a red rod and I have a green rod*. We accepted this.

Self-approval

We encouraged the students to check their own production by referring to the Fidels, the word charts, and their peers, in order to eliminate fear of the teacher's reaction to mistakes. We studiously avoided showing—by gesture, facial expression, or phrase—approval or disapproval of the language our students produced. We used Gattegno's rule: "Every time I let something pass, the students can conclude it is acceptable either as right, or at least a sufficiently good approximation in the circumstances."[3] When something was correct, the teacher let it pass but showed no other approval. When something was not correct, the teacher stopped the student and pointed out the location of the mistake but showed no other disapproval. The student made the quality judgment according to his own criteria.

Self-motivation

Three aspects of the Silent Way encouraged the students to be inwardly motivated.

First, the students had a sense of progressing. When drills were needed, boredom was not a problem. On the first day of study the students spent more than two hours memorizing the code of colors and sounds on the Fidels. They acted as if we had just taught them a new and interesting game. Gattegno says, "The atmosphere in the class becomes joyful, relaxed, and is experienced as conducive of true learning."[4] We found this description to be accurate.

Second, the students made simple but frequent breakthroughs that are part of Silent Way learning. For example, on the second day of teaching we introduced the category name: *a rod*. Next the teacher held up two rods and gave the model: *two rods*. Then the teacher held up three rods and said nothing. The students had already mastered the numbers one through ten and they knew the category name. They produced the phrase *three rods* without hesitation. Though it seemed a simple synthesis, we felt it was important for the students that they had made sense out of the new language using their own insight.

---

[1] Caleb Gattegno, *The Common Sense of Teaching Foreign Languages* (1976), p. 123. "The teacher has two functions with respect to the students: he must force awareness, he must provide exercises to insure facility."

[2] Kenneth Chastain, *Developing Second-Language Skills: Theory to Practice* (1976), p. 60.

[3] Gattegno, p. 122.

[4] Ibid., p. 24.

Third, the students had frequent opportunities to communicate with their peers. It was their first experience of communicating in a foreign language, and the resultant response left unambiguous evidence that they were being understood.

Independence

"Independence is the notion that we can only count on ourselves."[5] The students soon found that they could count on the teacher for only limited functions. Their dependence on the Fidels, the word charts, and their peers would gradually decrease. Long-term Silent Way goals include freeing the student to explore the literature of the language. Granting the students gradual independence is the groundwork. Three examples demonstrate gradual independence.

During the first week of the session the students began to initiate their own review sessions. We sometimes found these sessions already in progress when we arrived in the morning. The students used the Fidels and the rods for this, and they corrected one another.

The outcomes of unguided speaking sessions provided us with a further indication that student dependence was decreasing. We grouped students and seated them at different tables with only the rods. We gave no verbal instructions and we did not interrupt even to correct mistakes. The students used these ten to fifteen minutes to practice, and they continued to observe our rule that the native language should not be spoken in the classroom.

Third, the students became so competent with the Fidels that we could eventually introduce new words without saying them even once. Instead, we could point out the proper sequence of sounds on the Fidels. In fact, they became so independent of us in this matter that their pronunciation seemed better with words that they acquired in this way.

Peer correction

The process of peer correction made each student aware of the speech of other students, such that each could check it against his own ideas about the language. Peer correction helped each student to see that the speech of others was directly related to his own language development.

On the first day, we directed peer correction. We had to rely on it, since the teacher said each sound only once. The code of colors and sounds was complete in the collective memory, but a particular sound might be lost by one student. When this happened, the teacher isolated whichever student pronounced the sound well, and this student became the model.

When the students practiced patterns, we showed the location of mistakes, but correction was the responsibility of the group.

Rods as "x"

The rods were used in our classroom to make the language patterns authentic. With the rods we provided visible actions or situations for every language pattern. Everything the students said had a clear reference to the rods.

With the rods, we restricted vocabulary. We taught varieties of patterns, but only as they related to the rods. We used the rods as a teacher uses "x" or any other variable in the mathematics classroom. At a later stage other vocabulary could be substituted into the position that *rod* had taken. Thus *How many rods do you have?* could become *How many brothers do you have?*

Early introduction of writing

Since writing was so easily available to our students, we sought to keep their writing skill nearly equal to their reading and speaking skills. The relationship of colors and sounds allowed the students to begin reading from the word charts during the first day. Next we sent different students to the charts to point out words as their peers said them. The next step was for the students to copy the letters.

At first the students had difficulty reading back what they had written. We realized that the transition from reading the colored word charts to reading black-and-white print would be gradual, so we did not force the transition. After students had successfully written whole sentences and question-answer patterns, we introduced a black-and-white reading sheet. We helped them read this and their own handwriting by referring to the Fidels.

Silence

Silence for us was not a matter of philosophy but a very usable technique. It was a tool in our classroom rather than an idea from a book. Our two basic reasons for saying things only once were: first, to develop good listening habits, and second, to increase our students' awareness of what was going on in the classroom. When the students realized that they would get things only once they became quite attentive to everything we said.

A further purpose of silence was to make the larger part of every classroom hour an opportunity for the students to use and practice the language. It seemed obvious to us that the students would remember more of what they did than what they only heard, so we wanted them involved in language acts most of the time. This meant that the teacher was usually silent.

III. FOLLOW-UP—EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

The model-class students continued to study English by the Silent Way throughout the next school year. The following summer the English department invited teachers from other provinces to participate in an intensive seminar session focusing on Silent Way principles, observation and evaluation according to those principles, and practice teaching with group evaluation. Finally, we talked about the application of Silent Way techniques to ordinary classroom situations.

---

[5] Ibid., p. 45.

Fifteen teachers participated in this ten-day session. Two groups of students, beginning and intermediate, each received about twenty hours of language instruction.

During the final day's discussion about practical applications the participating teachers considered features of the Silent Way that would be useful to them. These features are presented here as evaluative criteria that the teachers set for themselves. We hope that others may find it useful to consider them.

Teacher's time or students' time?

A useful technique for self-evaluation is to estimate the ratio of time that the teacher uses the language to the time the students use the language. Our estimates during Silent Way classes have been as high as 90% in favor of the students. Skillful use of teacher withdrawal increases the ratio in favor of the students. One teacher suggested that the more the teacher withdraws, the more independent the students become. As part of teacher withdrawal, the silent part of the Silent Way improves the ratio in favor of the students. *A simple question: Who in the class has the time?*

Skill or personality?

Does a teacher rely on skill or personality? When we consider skill to personality as a ratio, the Silent Way appears to be a method that makes heavy demands on the skill of the teacher. However, the teachers at the seminar felt that Silent Way skills could be learned and developed. On the other hand, there are features of the Silent Way that make demands on the personality of the teacher. Some teachers felt that it was just not a part of their personality to keep silent! However, experienced teachers are usually confident of their teaching personality. *Ask what can be done to improve teaching skill.*

What did they bring today?

We set high expectations for the students. We agreed that they would bring certain abilities with them on the first day. The response showed that our assumptions were valid. We found that we could ask the students to be imaginative, to develop a lot of self-confidence, to speak without fear of mistakes, and to be motivated by the progress that they were making. *Ask a lot and get it.*

Did you ask them to think?

After one of the demonstration lessons, a teacher mentioned that she had seen five skills taught. In addition to the traditional four, she mentioned *thinking* as a skill that was a feature of Silent Way teaching. Others agreed. As part of the seminar the participating teachers studied Finnish one morning.[6] A general comment from those who experienced the Silent Way from a student's viewpoint was that the learner must think. The teacher used withdrawal, silence, and a skillful way of dealing with mistakes; the students were forced to think, and were given time to do so. *Ask them to think.*

Who sets the pace?

One of the Silent Way ideas we discussed was "Teaching should be subordinated to learning."[7] During the seminar this meant that we found out how we should teach and what we should teach next by watching the learner. If the teacher tries to be aware of the progress of the students at every moment, teaching can be planned according to immediate learning needs. We modified the syllabus according to those learning needs. *Let the learners have something to say about teaching.*

Steady improvement or perfection?

We asked the teachers to be concerned with steady improvement over each lesson rather than with perfection. There are many problem sounds for beginning Thai learners of English, especially some final consonant sounds. Some teachers found it difficult to allow the students to continue producing the language with only an approximation of these sounds. But the intermediate Silent Way students presented a convincing argument. Their teachers had never asked for perfection but had always been concerned with steady improvement. After one year of Silent Way classes, their pronunciation of problem sounds was considered remarkable. *Ask for improvement day by day, but not perfection.*

Do you have their attention?

A Silent Way teacher has two jobs: to force attention and to provide for practice. But the attention must be forced toward the new language, not toward the teacher. We all watched the attention or awareness of the students. Was it focused on the language stimulus (rods, charts, communication of other students) or on the teacher? A tape recorder or videotape machine can provide a good measurement of where attention is focused. The occasional presence of videotape cameras helped some teachers reduce their role. They were camera shy. *Force attention toward the language, not the teacher.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chastain, Kenneth. 1976. *Developing second-language skills: theory to practice*. Chicago: Rand McNally Publishing Company.

Gattegno, Caleb. 1976. *The common sense of teaching foreign languages*. New York: Educational Solutions Inc.

Stevick, Earl. 1974. A riddle with some hints for its solution. *Action*, *8* (Sept. 1974).

---

[6] This lesson was taught by Peace Corps Volunteer Neal Davis, a Silent Way teacher of Finnish descent.

[7] Earl Stevick, in a review article of Caleb Gattegno's *Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way*. *TESOL Quarterly*, *8*, 3 (September 1974).

Time-Tense Alignment Exercises: A Dramatic Treatment of Verb Tenses

PETER L. MCGUIRE
Technical University of Wrocław

Peter McGuire teaches English to scientific workers at the Technical University of Wrocław, Poland. He previously taught English for two years in Thessaloniki, Greece. Mr. McGuire began his teaching career in a country high school in Victoria, Australia, his native country. In Australia he also participated in creative drama sessions, and he is now interested in applying such techniques in the teaching of English as a foreign language. In his free time he enjoys practicing yoga and learning Polish.

The biggest difficulty in learning English is, of course, mastering the use of verb tenses. We all have our various schematic diagrams showing the differences between simple, continuous, and perfect tenses, as well as our grammatical rules. But no amount of theory, no number of rules, can take the place of well-planned practice.

The basic problem, however, is understanding the relationship between a particular verb tense structure and the time-space situation that it represents. My students here in Poland find this problem especially vexing, since there are no equivalent grammatical structures in their own language. To remedy this situation I have devised the following "time-tense alignment" exercises, to be carried out in simulated situations.

Materials

Multiple copies of the following are prepared by the teacher:

A. The chronology of a fictitious character, in which dates are aligned with events in his life

B. The program for one day from the diary of another fictitious character, in which times of the day are aligned with his various activities

Examples are given below. These schemas are written in note form, thus requiring students to expand statements into full sentences. Later, students can prepare and write their own schemas.

Rationale

Such schemas place events in a definite time-space context, so that the tense of the verb can be seen in its context. For, generally speaking, choice of verb tense depends on three elements:

a. the time at which the question is asked
b. the point in time of the event that the question is about
c. the duration of the event

In these exercises the teacher informs the students of the exact time at which the question is asked (in relation to the situation). The times of the events are shown in the schemas. In this way greater precision with respect to time and duration is achieved than with normal reading texts and stories (so often the everyday diet of foreign language learners).

The content of such schemas should contain plenty of "human interest" material, and should be at least a little sensational. In this way the teacher can create a dynamic simulated situation, with the students responding to questions in an imaginative way and perhaps creating further dramatic situations.

I. THE LIFE OF THOMAS EVERYMAN

15–8–14[1]	Born in King's Cross, London. Seventh of eight children.
1921–27	Primary school. Played truant, often caned.[2]
1927–28	Secondary school. Expelled.
1928–34	Worked in railway luggage office. Fired for inefficiency.
1934–37	Casual laborer on farms around England.
11–1–38	Met future wife (a ticket collector) on local bus.
19–11–38	Wedding day.
14–8–39	First child born—son.
1–9–39	Called up to army. Fought in France.
21–9–41	Wounded—transferred to hospital.
30–7–43	Returned to front. In Africa until end of war.
1945	Obtained white-collar position in factory office.
27–10–46	Divorced.
29–10–47	Remarried. New wife owned own house in village.
3–12–48	Twins born—both girls.
1952	Problems with son by former marriage: former wife had custody of son, but son wanted to live with father. Present wife did not want son in house.
1955	Became manager of factory.
9–12–67	Daughter married local headmaster's son.
1968	First son in trouble with police.
1975	Retired. Took up stamp collecting.
1–8–76	Wife died.
15–4–77	Died of heart attack.
17–4–77	Buried.

Methodology for Schema I

Notes:

a. This exercise is straightforward, since most questions and answers will be in simple past tenses.

b. The teacher must at all times correct the students' mistakes, for these exercises involve learning by trial and error.

Steps:

1. The teacher asks the students to read the statements in full, and explains vocabulary as necessary.

2. The teacher sets the date at which the questions are asked. For example, 1955.

3. He directs questions to the students, stressing (if need be) the key word in the question which should elicit a grammatically correct answer. For example:

Question: When WAS Thomas Everyman born?
Answer: He was born in....
Question: When IS his birthday?
Answer: His birthday is on....
Q. DID he finish secondary school?
Q. HAS he ever worked on a farm?
Q. WAS he a good boy at school? Etc.

And questions about the future:

Q. WILL he have any more children? Etc.

Care should be taken to have the questions contain a variety of grammatical structures.

4. The teacher nominates one student as Thomas Everyman. Other students ask him questions in the second person: *When were you born?* Etc.

5. Another date is set by the teacher, perhaps after Thomas's death, so students can ask more questions among themselves, as directed by the teacher.

II. THE DIARY OF JOHN L. MAGNUS, SR.
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES, INC.

Program for 25 March 1978

7:00	Rise
8:00	Breakfast with family. (Orange juice, no carbohydrates)
8:15	Call Paris office re loans.
9:00	Leave for work. James has the Rolls ready.
9:15	Conference. (Expect Brazilian representative to sign contract.)
10:00	Meeting with British Ambassador. Ask about exports.
11:00	Appointment at health studio. (Reduce weight!)
12:00	Lunch at Dorchester Hotel with Miss Rachel Swelch. (Take flowers.)
1:00	Round of golf (weather permitting).
2:00	Siesta. Tell secretary: no phone calls.
3:00	Black coffee—no sugar.
3:15	Negotiate new $1 million deal with ONO Inc. (Be friendly!)
4:00	Drinks with directors. (Don't stay too long.)
5:00	Buy presents for children. (T.V. set?)
5:15	Return home (in Jaguar).
5:30	Meal at home. Time for nap?
7:00	Attend premier session of new film (with director of ONO Inc.).
11:00	Return home (in Pontiac).
11:30	Hot chocolate. Ask wife re any household problems.
12:00	Retire. (Turn up electric blanket.)

---

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE: The three numbers separated by dashes represent, respectively, the day, month, and year. Thus, 15–8–14 means 15 August 1914. We have retained the author's use of the European system for abbreviating the date, as we believe more of our readers may be familiar with it than with the American system, which places the month first, and then the day and year: 8–15–14 (or 8/15/14).

[2] EDITOR'S NOTE: *caned* = beaten or hit with a cane. (Rare in contemporary American English.)

Methodology for Schema II

Steps:

1. The teacher again asks the students to read the statements in full, explaining any vocabulary.

2. He questions the students about Mr. Magnus's schedule and his reminder notes, setting the time at, say, "yesterday."

3. He sets the "scene" for the following simulated situations:

   a. A dialogue between Mr. Magnus and his wife, set at eight o'clock in the morning. Perhaps the teacher can act the part of the wife and the student body can act the part of Mr. Magnus. Such questions as these can be asked:

   Will you be having lunch at home, dear?
   In which car will you go to the office?
   Can I come with you to the film tonight?
   Will you be able to buy the children a present?

   b. A telephone call from his wife to Mr. Magnus, say at 3:00 P.M.

   c. Another dialogue in the evening, with such questions as:

   With whom did you have lunch today?
   Were you able to play golf?
   Did you enjoy the film?

4. The students act the roles of husband and wife. They are sure to provide their own variations!

5. Further characters may be added, as each situation gains momentum; for example, a ten-year-old son who asks "Daddy, what will you bring home for me?" at breakfast time.

6. Also, further situations may be simulated; for example, a phone call from Miss Rachel Swelch at a rather inconvenient time!

Then students can write their own schemas, in note form. Here are some suggested topics:

a. Their own personal chronologies or daily programs, real or imaginary.

b. The record of the main events in the plot of a television program, using the time on the clock. Such a schema, taken from a detective serial, might go like this:

20:01 Slain body discovered by taxi driver.
20:02 Kojak called in.
20:03 Anonymous telephone call received at Kojak's office, etc.

These can be brought to class and, if multiple copies can be made, distributed and treated in the same way.

The main point is that "time-tense alignment" exercises should be used in such a way that they are amusing, lively, and involving for the students. At the same time it is hoped that the students will come to grips with those terrible verb tenses! □

Opening the Language Lab continued from page 5

For an extra bit of variety, a "Special of the Week" activity may be required. This may be accomplished in place of one of the stations, or, provided all students can handle it, in addition to them. I have compiled entire newspaper issues using "Weekly Special" material. Some sample Weekly Specials are: (*a*) What happened on Yap Day (or other recent holiday)? What did you see/hear/eat? Did you enjoy the holiday? Why or why not? (*b*) Write a poem about rain. (*c*) With a partner, fill in the blanks in the following dialogue. (*d*) A visitor will come to our school this week. Write five questions to ask him. (*e*) Describe someone in your class, but do not give the person's name.

At the end of the term, the students are evaluated according to the number of points they have accumulated throughout the term. A curve will stimulate competition, but it tends to penalize the slow, thorough students. An alternate system is a B grade given for completion of the required exercises (well done); extra work is required for an A.

Advantages of the open lab

This model is more sensible than the traditional language lab in several ways. Like the latter, it is individualized. Students may work at their own levels; they may review material they did not fully grasp in class or work on material more difficult than that done in class. The teacher is free to roam from student to student, making suggestions and offering help.

Unlike the traditional lab, the open-classroom model strengthens independent work. This lab is student-centered rather than teacher-centered. Freedom to choose exercises and/or the order in which they are done encourages students to see learning and studying as their own responsibility. This is particularly important for students intending to enter American colleges or universities, where independent study is becoming more and more common.

Unlike the traditional lab, which allows the students to practice only speaking and listening, this lab allows them work on all language skills. The lab time can be used for any area in which students need more work, as well as general support for all language skills. And most unlike the traditional lab, this system is stimulating and interesting. It offers a variety of activities to develop a variety of skills. It offers flexibility in class procedures. It allows movement. And it allows personal, human contact between teacher and student on a one-to-one basis. With today's crowded classrooms, a more humanized environment, rather than a more mechanized one, is certainly in order. □

Destroying the Teacher: The Need for Learner-Centered Teaching

Alan C. McLean began his English-teaching career in Zambia, later serving as English language officer with the British Council in Venezuela and Nepal. In 1972 he took up a research fellowship at the University of Strathclyde, investigating the production and evaluation of videocassette programs for the teaching of English to minority-group children in Scotland. Two years later he joined Longman as a writer and adviser on English-teaching materials, and has since written a number of textbooks, principally for Arab students, besides working in several teacher-training courses in Arab countries.

"He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher."
Walt Whitman

"Most children in school are scared most of the time."
John Holt

"Much of what we say and do in school only makes children feel that they do not know things that, in fact, they knew perfectly well before we began to talk about them."
John Holt

"If the culture of the teacher is to become part of the consciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the consciousness of the teacher."
Basil Bernstein

"Schools are designed on the assumption that there is a secret to everything in life; that the quality of life depends on knowing that secret; that secrets can be known only in orderly succession; and that only teachers can properly reveal these secrets."
Ivan Illich

"Who needs the most practice talking in school? Who gets the most?"
John Holt

"In the average classroom someone is talking for two-thirds of the time, two-thirds of the talk is teacher-talk, and two-thirds of the teacher-talk is direct influence."
N.A. Flanders

"Language complexity increases when the child writes or speaks about events in which the child has participated in a goal-seeking process."
J.S. Bruner

"Information is rarely, if ever, stored in the human nervous system without affective coding."
Earl W. Stevick

"We must not fool ourselves...into thinking that guiding children to answers by carefully chosen leading questions is in any important respect different from just telling them the answers in the first place.... The only answer that really sticks in a child's mind is the answer to a question that he asked or might ask of himself."
John Holt

"True knowledge, Plato argues, must be within us all, and learning consists solely of discovering what we already know."
Colin Blakemore

"If a teacher is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind."
Kahlil Gibran

ALAN C. MCLEAN
Resource and Development Unit,
Longman Group

The title of this article comes from a poem by Walt Whitman: "He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher." I chose this epigraph because I wish to plead for a less dominant classroom role for the language teacher, in accord with the importance of classroom interaction in the language-learning process.

First, I would like to encourage a lessening of attention to the linguistic content of language teaching, and suggest that such content, and the theoretical basis on which we choose it, are not as crucial for language learning as are aspects of classroom behavior. Too often, in discussing the teaching of English, we behave as if language were the most important factor in the classroom. I think this is seldom the case.

We need to see English as essentially an educative subject, linked to the cognitive development of learners, rather than as something isolated from the rest of the curriculum. Unfortunately, in many classrooms throughout the world, little true education takes place. Instead, there is rote learning of material irrelevant to the learners' interests. We need to be aware of the educational potential of English in such circumstances.

To fully realize this potential we need to look outside the confines of English language teaching itself. There is now a considerable body of work that focuses on the conditions under which children learn most effectively. This work relates both to the internal processes involved in apprehending and storing information and to the most favorable conditions for the operation of these processes. I would like to consider here the relevance of this work to the teaching of English. I will deal with it under five main headings: reduction of coercion, active learner involvement, experience before interpretation, avoidance of oversimplification, and the value of silence.

Reduction of coercion

Several of the quotations accompanying this article come from the American educationist John Holt. One of Holt's major beliefs is that for most pupils school is a place of fear. Children are coerced by various means to produce answers that are acceptable to their teacher rather than to engage in practical thinking. Coercion can be nonviolent, of course. The threat of withdrawal of love or approval is, in fact, often much more powerful than the threat of physical punishment. Whatever its form, we need to end unnecessary coercion in class and thus minimize defensive learning.

The fear that many children experience arises most often out of bewilderment, which itself frequently results from the clash between the culture of the learner and that of the teacher. Holt puts it well: "Much of what we say and do in school only makes children feel that they do not know things that, in fact, they knew perfectly well before we began to talk about them." As Bernstein shows, the clash between learner and teacher, which may involve any of a number of factors—age, class, or nationality, for example—can inhibit true learning insofar as the teacher does not have access to the learner's world. There is a clear need for the teacher to endeavor to get into the learner's consciousness much more than he usually does at present.

Unfortunately, in many countries the typical teaching style is authoritarian. The teacher is, in Illich's phrase, the "custodian of the secret": he is the source from which all wisdom flows, and he is always correct. This position is very threatening to most learners. It is vital for the teacher to show that he is not superhuman, that he can make mistakes, and that there are many things of which he is ignorant. Only when the teacher's authority recedes can the learner be thrown back on his own resources. There is clear evidence that the learner has a marked ability to correct mistakes that he has made; furthermore, mistakes so corrected will seldom be repeated, whereas mistakes corrected by the teacher often will be made again. But this self-correcting mechanism can operate only when the teacher gives up playing God.

Active learner involvement

Teachers talk too much. And too much of this talk is directive. Many of us are wryly familiar with Flanders's "two-thirds" rule, which, in my experience, holds true even in the most "progressive" classrooms. The only solution is for the teacher consciously to become more silent, so that the learner may become more vocal.

Learning is most effective when the learner is the initiator of the learning process. (Bruner notes that this holds true

---

This article is based on a paper delivered by the writer at the IATEFL Conference held at Poznań, Poland, in April 1979.

even for children a few weeks old.) With regard to language, it has been found that syntactic complexity and sentence length both increase when the topic is one in which the learner has been actively involved. This surely argues for the kind of withdrawal of control on the teacher's part that I have recommended above.

Related to the above fact is evidence that the emotion associated with learning an item is important in storing it. In a recent article, Brown has described affective factors as "the keys to language-learning success." Even hostility, it appears, stores items better than a total lack of emotional involvement—though perhaps this is a path we should not follow too far!

There is thus a clear need for the content of language-teaching materials to involve the learner—to relate to his needs, interests, and moral concerns. It seems to me that too much of our material is empty of such involvement. Characters and situations in English-teaching course books are frequently vapid stereotypes. Although some writers might argue that materials, for the widest distribution, must be morally value-free, I would say that being morally neutral is itself to make a decision about values.

Another important finding is that learning improves when goals are set before tasks are begun: the learner should be aware of the learning objectives. Relating this to reading, for example, we may consider it more useful to ask questions about a text *before* the students read it than afterward. In this way, the learner will approach the text with a set purpose, as adults normally do. After all, we seldom read anything without a reason; yet that is what we ask our learners to do time and time again.

Experience before interpretation

Psychologists such as Bruner and Piaget have stressed the need for an initial tactile stage of learning. Bruner calls it the "enactive" stage and Piaget the "sensorimotor" stage, but the principle is the same, namely, that the learner needs time to "mess around" with target material before he is asked to give proof that he has learned it. We may have noticed this process while watching our own children beginning to read. There is a good deal of handling of printed material, or playing with it, of changing the words of the text before real reading starts. And this period of *experiencing* the material seems to be a necessary precondition for *interpreting* it. Yet we often ask language learners to dispense with this stage when they are dealing with a particular piece of learning.

Avoidance of oversimplification

It may seem paradoxical to follow the above plea for giving the learner more time to *experience* target material by asking the teacher not to oversimplify it. In reality, however, this is another aspect of the same principle: that learning is something only the learner can do. The teacher cannot learn *for* the pupil; he can only provide good conditions within which learning may take place. If things are made too easy for the learner, he will not be inclined to use his own learning resources.

What I am specifically questioning is the idea that a step-by-step approach is the only way to learn. Holt says: "If we taught children to speak, they would never learn." What he means is that as teachers we would want to break up the learning process into a series of gradeable steps and prevent movement from one step to another until the first step had been mastered. We would ensure that the learner was not exposed to tasks that were, we felt, beyond his abilities. It is doubtful if learners always benefit from such a piecemeal approach. The indications are that the excessive suppression of irregularities in language does not make the learning task easier—it makes it more difficult. If, for example, irregularities in spelling are systematically suppressed, and we offer the learner only a predigested, simplified variety of language, we make the transfer to real language more difficult. Teaching the notion of irregularity from the beginning gives the learner a more accurate picture of what is involved in learning the language.

Again, let us relate this question of oversimplifying to the problem of reading. New words and structures in a reading passage are commonly practiced and drilled before the passage is read, so that the learner does not have to cope with anything that he hasn't seen before. In some cultures it is regarded as improper, in fact, to ignore any word that appears in the text, the printed text itself being accorded an almost religious respect. Yet if we drill all the new language in the reading passage before it is read, we are preventing the learner from developing a crucial reading skill: the need to guess, to make hypotheses, to play hunches about the nature of the text—specifically, to predict what is likely to come next. The ability to pick up context cues within a text is vital to the successful decoding of it. Merritt has described the act of reading as "one of prediction and model-making rather than word-recognition." And Goodman defines the process as follows: "Reading is a selective process. It involves partial use of available language cues....

As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made, to be confirmed, rejected, or refined as reading progresses." If we oversimplify texts or prepare the learner for them too fully, we are preventing him from attaining a skill which is a vital part of a mature reading ability.

The value of silence

A key psychological process underlying all learning is the transfer of learning items from the short-term memory to the long-term memory. Research by Luria (among others) suggests that a period of silence during the short-term memory span (calculated to be approximately twenty seconds) encourages this transfer. In examining the mental processes of a professional mnemonist, Luria found that such a period of silence between items was necessary for their effective storage.

Protagonists of the Silent Way have emphasized the value of silence in the teaching process. Anyone who has undergone Silent Way teaching will, I think, confirm how *active* the learner is forced to be during the period of silence.

Silence is also fundamental to Curran's Community Language Learning. Each period of learning is followed by a period of reflection, the first part of which is conducted in silence. La Forge describes the value of this silence as follows: "The silence cannot be underestimated in any way for its value and impact on progress in language learning. Far from being a vacuous period of time after the experience part of the class, the silence of the reflection period is characterized by intensive activity."

I believe that these findings should make us reconsider the value of teacher talk in our classrooms. For example, are we always justified in engaging in immediate repetition of items? Perhaps a more effective method would be for the initial presentation of an item to be followed by a short period of silence, in which the item is available for short-term memory review and long-term memory transfer by the learner. This would also fit in better with the idea of the teacher as facilitator (to use Rogers's term), advocated earlier in this article.

Finally, I would like to stress the need for all of us to consider learners as whole and integrated human beings and respond to them as such. We should see English as a means of education, relating closely to the development of the learner's cognitive ability, rather than as simply the inculcation of a specific series of linguistic skills.

Let me end by drawing your attention to the two final quotations, by neurologist Colin Blakemore and philosopher Kahlil Gibran. Both serve to emphasize something we often tend to forget: namely, that teaching is not so much a process of cramming outside knowledge into the learner's mind as of drawing out the knowledge that each of our students has within him.

REFERENCES

Bernstein, Basil. 1970. Education cannot compensate for society. *New Society*.

Blakemore, Colin. 1977. *Mechanics of mind*. BBC Publications.

Brown, H. Douglas. 1977. Some limitations of C-L/CLL models of second language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly* (December 1977).

Bruner, Jerome S. 1973. *The relevance of education*. New York: Norton (Penguin 1974).

Flanders, Ned A. 1962. Using interaction analysis in the in-service training of teachers. *Journal of Experimental Education, 30*, 4.

La Forge, Paul G. 1977. Uses of social silence in the interpersonal dynamics of community language learning. *TESOL Quarterly* (December 1977).

Gibran, Kahlil. 1926. *The prophet*. Heinemann.

Goodman, Kenneth S. 1967. Reading: a psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist*.

Holt, John. 1969. *How children fail*. New York: Dell (Pelican).

________. 1972. *How children learn*. New York: Dell (Pelican 1979).

Illich, Ivan. 1972. *Deschooling society*. New York: Harper & Row (Penguin 1973).

Luria, A. R. 1968. *The mind of a mnemonist*. New York: Basic (Penguin 1975).

Merritt, John E. 1974. *What shall we teach?* Ward Lock.

Rogers, Carl A. 1965. *Client-centered therapy: its current practice, implications, and theory*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Stevick, Earl W. 1976. *Memory, meaning and method*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.

Whitman, Walt. 1976. *Leaves of grass*. New York: Penguin. □

Integrating Group Work continued from page 3

dents don't make much progress despite all the work they do (that is, group work may hide and protect slow learners). However, there is no evidence that these students would do better in the conventional classroom setting.

Conclusion

My classroom experience with this procedure has led me to the following conclusions. I have found that the same procedure can be used to teach other common grammatical problems (tenses, prepositions, conditional clauses, etc.). As a way of dealing with grammar problems that some but not all students have, each group can work on a different problem. Group work can definitely be used to advantage in teaching grammar as well as in teaching other similarly appropriate subject matter (punctuation, spelling, mechanics, vocabulary).

Several other teachers have now tried this approach using some version of the procedure I have outlined above. Most of them report favorable results, and they have decided to continue using this approach from time to time in their classes. Their response has prompted me to write up this way of teaching grammar so that I could share it with a larger audience.

REFERENCES

Curran, Charles A. 1972. *Counseling-learning: a whole-person model for education*. New York: Grune and Stratton.

________. 1976. *Counseling-learning in second languages*. Apple River, Ill.: Apple River Press.

Danielson, Dorothy and Rebecca Hayden. 1973. *Using English: your second language*. Englewood Cliffs N.J.: Prentice-Hall

Gattegno, Caleb. 1972. *Teaching foreign languages in schools: the silent way*. 2nd ed. New York: Educational Solutions, Inc.

Rosensweig, Fred J. 1974. *Improving the communicative competence of advanced ESL students*. Unpublished M.A. thesis in TESL, University of California, Los Angeles.

Witbeck, Michael C. 1976. Peer correction procedures for intermediate and advanced ESL composition lessons. *TESOL Quarterly, 10, 3*, pp. 321–37. □

Speedwriting: A Technique for Improving Writing Fluency

DIANA CLARKE
American University Alumni Language Center, Chiangmai, Thailand

DIANNE WALKER
Chinese University of Hong Kong

Diana Clarke teaches English as a second language at the Central YMCA Community College in Chicago. She first taught English as a Peace Corps Volunteer at a teacher-training college in Petchburi, Thailand. After receiving an M.A. in TESL at the University of California, Los Angeles, she returned to Thailand to serve for two years as director of the American University Alumni Language Center in Chiangmai.

Dianne Walker teaches English for the British Council and serves as a teacher trainer and materials and curriculum developer for the International Social Service in Hong Kong. She has also taught at UCLA and at the Chinese University in Hong Kong, where her primary interests were teaching writing and developing an individualized reading program.

Speedwriting (or timed writing) is a writing-improvement technique that was first suggested to us in 1974 in a *UCLA Workpapers* article by Marianne Celce-Murcia.[1] At that time we were teaching assistants for advanced ESL classes at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and in using speedwriting and other longer forms of writing practice we were primarily concerned with improving our students' writing fluency, focusing on academic skills. Since then, we have used speedwriting with students at a variety of levels (from low-intermediate to advanced), in different settings (both academic and nonacademic), and in several cultures (Thailand and Hong Kong, as well as the United States). It is one of the most useful techniques we have found, and we would like to share it with readers of the FORUM.

Basic procedures

The basic speedwriting procedure, which we have modified for use at various proficiency levels, is very simple:

1. The teacher writes a topic on the board and asks some questions about it to begin discussion.
2. The discussion proceeds for seven to ten minutes, during which the teacher may or may not write points on the board.
3. The students think for one minute (no writing allowed).
4. The students write for seven to ten minutes. The teacher should give a warning when one minute is left.

Modifications

As a result of our experience with different groups of students, we have modified the procedure so that more or less guidance may be given by the teacher. The labels that we use below (intermediate, advanced, etc.) are open to interpretation; we suggest that the teacher select the degree of control suitable for her class regardless of the label we have used. However, in every case the time limits should be adhered to.

---

[1] "Report on an informal classroom experiment on speedwriting with a suggestion for further research." *UCLA Workpapers in TESL*, Vol. 8, 1974, 63–70. Celce-Murcia did not develop the technique but had observed it being used in various forms by different teachers, and she wanted to document it and give it wider exposure.

For intermediate groups the teacher writes the topic on the board as a partial topic sentence; for example, *In my opinion, a good teacher*............. During discussion the teacher lists points on the board, and before the students write she gives them a skeleton paragraph structure like the following:

In my opinion, a good teacher............ In addition, ... Also, ... Finally, ... (One transitional expression does not necessarily mean one sentence.)

For high-intermediate students it is not always necessary to give a topic sentence. Instead, the topic could be stated as a question (*What makes a good teacher?*) which initiates discussion. The teacher then makes a rough outline of the students' discussion of the topic. Consistency with word forms is important. That is, all main headings should be the same part of speech (for example, nouns) and all subheadings should be the same part of speech (for example, all nouns or all adjectives, etc.). For the above topic the outline, with points brought up in discussion filled in, might look like this:

1. Personality
    a.
    b.
    c.
2. Educational background
    a.
    b.
    c.
3. Preparation
    a.
    b.
    c.

At the advanced level the students are already familiar with paragraph structure and use of transitional expressions, so the emphasis is on developing fluency and overall coherence. The teacher introduces the topic and may add some questions for the students to consider, but leaves the students to brainstorm ideas about the topic in pairs or small groups. (At some point the students may begin to generate their own speedwriting topics.) The teacher then circulates to ensure that all groups adhere to the time limits for discussing, thinking, and writing, and to clarify vocabulary or structural problems that may arise.

Correction procedures

After the students have speedwritten, the teacher can adopt any of a number of correction/evaluation procedures. Most commonly, the teacher can indicate (or actually correct) all errors outside of class (at first checking only one or two grammatical or organizational points) and can then return the papers to the students for revision. We have also had some success with selecting one paper with representative errors (or the teacher can compose a fictitious one that incorporates representative errors) and presenting it (on the board or using an overhead projector) for discussion by the whole class of its strengths and weaknesses. The method of using one student's paper, even anonymously, may be culturally inappropriate for some groups, so discretion is advised.

Another procedure that is particularly effective is peer correction (which is not teacher-led); the two preceding procedures might prepare the students to do peer correction. For a specific discussion of peer correction procedures, we suggest Witbeck's article in the *TESOL Quarterly* (Vol. 10, No. 3, September 1976). Peer correction may also make students more sensitive to the need to write legibly.

Choosing topics

We have found that topics based on international, national, or local events, topics related to textbook readings, and topics related to events in the students' lives are most successful. In all cases contextualization is essential. Carefully selected speedwriting topics generate a sufficient amount of discussion so that the students do not waste time thinking of what to say. Indeed, we have found that before they get used to the idea of a time limit, they usually run out of time before they run out of things to say! For more advanced students, topics that are appropriate for the development of a particular rhetorical type (comparison-contrast, cause-effect, etc.) can be chosen. In working toward a more holistic approach to our teaching, we always try to coordinate the topic with readings, listening exercises, or other activities we are doing, in order to provide continuity in vocabulary and structures.

Useful results

We feel that speedwriting can be useful in three areas. First, because of the time limit, the students cannot (or must learn not to) labor over grammar. Thus speedwriting helps them to write more fluently. Second, speedwriting discourages the students from composing in their native language first and then translating into English. Using speedwriting, they increase their speed in writing and decrease errors due to faulty translation. Finally, since the goal is for the students to produce a coherent piece of writing in a short time, speedwriting helps them organize their ideas quickly, which is especially important for ESL students who will have to take essay exams in English. The speaking and listening practice gained from the preliminary discussion are extra benefits.

How often should speedwriting be used? Depending on our situation, we have used speedwriting only once a week or as frequently as three times a week. We are convinced that the more frequently it is used the more students improve. And we are not alone in our support of speedwriting; despite initial frustrations with the time limit, our students consistently approve of it. □

Maurice Imhoof is Director of the English Language Institute, The American University in Cairo, where he has been professor of English language teaching since 1973. Professor Imhoof received his doctorate from Teachers College, Columbia University, and has taught in the United States at Ball State University and Indiana University. He has taught, consulted, or held training programs in Afghanistan, India, Egypt, and Jordan. He is a frequent contributor to language-teaching journals and is a coauthor of textbooks for composition, including one for overseas students: *From Paragraph to Essay* (Longman, 1974).

Mary Murphy has been director of the freshman writing program and visiting assistant professor of English and comparative literature at the American University in Cairo since September 1976. She previously taught at the University of Notre Dame, Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana. Dr. Murphy is author of *Taste and the Orators: An Edition of Two Plays of Samuel Foote with Commentary* and *The Freshman Writing Program at the American University in Cairo: A Manual for Teachers, Directors, and Administrators*. She has published a number of essays on literary and linguistic topics in professional journals.

Language, Communication, and Human Needs: A Look at Second-Language and Rhetoric Programs

MAURICE IMHOOF and MARY MURPHY
The American University in Cairo

Many universities outside English-speaking countries use English as a medium of instruction. These universities often maintain two types of programs: an English language skills-development program and a humanities or English literature program, the latter often including traditional rhetoric or composition courses. These two types of programs—with quite different educational objectives—are sometimes in different administrative departments, sometimes in the same, and sometimes split in other ways which may lead to duplication and overlapping programs, confused or unfocused objectives, or even professional misunderstandings between administration and faculty.

At the American University in Cairo, the English Language Institute offers an intensive English program to pre-university students. The Freshman Writing Program, a part of the English and Comparative Literature Department, offers a writing or rhetoric program, which is also largely skills-oriented.

The following conversation between the directors of the two programs takes a look at the attitudes, controversies, and myths about second-language programs and rhetoric programs in order to dispel misconceptions about them and to suggest how they can serve each other in fulfilling the language, communication, and human requirements of the learner. The dialogue discusses what the programs are trying to do, why they are often at odds, their differences and their similarities, and how they can complement each other in order to improve their effectiveness.

Murphy: I'd like to begin by playing devil's advocate in order to get at some positive aspects of language programs. Before I had any professional contact with second-language programs, I gave tacit consent to the myth that they were "childish," "basic," and "formal"—in the pejorative sense of teaching mechanics without substance—in other words, that they offered "Mickey Mouse" courses that seemed to emphasize basics too much and too long. Do second-language programs deserve this reputation?

Imhoof: An artist can't paint without tools and technique. If he has no technique, we call him a painter rather than an artist. A language learner certainly can't use his second or foreign language for academic purposes until he has control of the basics.

Murphy: Nevertheless, the reputation exists. Is it because second-language programs concentrate on simple-minded drills about tables and chairs, pencils and erasers, and "Hello," "How are you?," "What time is it?," and so on?

Imhoof: Any second-language program that gets stuck at this level of language use deserves a bad reputation. I suppose all beginning or lower-level instruction must make use of the everyday environment of its students and incorporate frequently used expressions. Unfortunately, some programs never get beyond this stage. It may be the fault of the syllabus, the timetable, or the methodology.

Students have far wider interests than we usually give them credit for, however. In a second-language program, the cognitive abilities of the learners far outreach their language abilities. A good language program must take these cognitive abilities into account. As you have suggested, it's a myth that all second-language programs are, or must be, childish.

Murphy: Obviously students need to develop strong, basic language skills and to move on to higher-level skills. What would you consider the goals of a second-language program to be?

Imhoof: Although the second-language student already has a perfectly good language which may serve his everyday practical, intellectual, and spiritual needs, he (or some outside authority such as parents, the school system, etc.) has decided that a second language is desirable. It's desirable usually in only one sphere of his life, unless he plans to emigrate. In many countries, English is used principally for academic purposes, especially in university-level education. In this case, you could say the payoff is the student's ability to do academic work in English. That's the motivation and the objective of our students at AUC [The American University in Cairo]. I think there are some other goals of language study—humanistic goals, perhaps—that are equally valid. Finding out how language works and how people use and misuse language, for example.

Murphy: Students don't necessarily have these humanistic goals, do they?

Imhoof: Definitely not. The common situation is that students study a second language to get better jobs. This is especially true in developing countries where persons with second-language skills are highly sought after in business, commerce, and technology. The first task of a second-language program is to give students a sense of achievement in acquiring the language. This means that the language elements and communicative functions are carefully selected and sequenced; very limited tasks are practiced so that optimum learning takes place. In the short term, students acquire enough language to remain interested in the language and in the learning process. In the long term, they acquire enough language to use in the pragmatic world of work or for educational purposes or for personal self-fulfillment.

Murphy: Most of our students already have several years of English study before they enter the university, but they still have a terrible time with English. Why do you think second-language programs fail?

Imhoof: I don't think *intensive* language programs do fail. Secondary schools don't usually have intensive programs—they have perhaps only one period of English per day. An intensive program should be twenty or more hours per week. In the sense that programs fail, it's because the expectations are too high and the commitment too low. The linguistically naïve administrator and student think it's just a matter of someone pouring the language into the learner's head; a few weeks of study should take the learner from zero ability to native proficiency. Language learning, unfortunately, isn't like that.

Murphy: Are you making a distinction, then, between *second* and *intensive* language programs?

Imhoof: It's only a matter of degree, perhaps. A rather traditional distinction is made between foreign-language, second-language, and bilingual-education programs. What language educators usually mean by these terms is that *foreign language* programs are rather academic, in the sense that they emphasize content and often don't prepare the student to use the language as a medium of communication in the environment. *Second language* implies using the language as an alternate medium of communication; that is, the environment supports the use of the language. *Bilingual education* suggests that two languages have equal status in the educational process. Any of these programs could be intensive. Whether they are intensive or not is an administrative rather than a methodological matter, however. Chances are that the bilingual program is intensive, since both languages are used as media of communication and education; second-language programs might be intensive, and foreign-language programs probably are not.

Murphy: When second-language programs *are* intensive, why do they fail?

Imhoof: Historically, there are reasons for failure in some intensive language programs. There are basically two reasons. First, the environment doesn't support the use of the language, and the students' motivation and interest soon lapse. It's very difficult in the United States, for instance, to make use of skills in Indonesian, or even German, Italian, or French. The study and practice of the language is therefore very academic and artificial. Most learners can't pursue language study or maintain skills in this fashion. Second, the basic psychological and linguistic premises on which many intensive programs were based in the past were not productive for language learning.

Murphy: What do you mean by the statement that intensive language programs were built on unproductive premises?

Imhoof: These programs were characterized by excessive memorization of set phrases or patterns, endless repetition, and mechanical drills. The learner's attention was focused on the smallest formal features of the language without his necessarily understanding the overall meaning of the utterance. The student never arrived at genuine communication. Judged from what we now know of the nature of the language and language learning, such mechanistic programs would appear to be doomed to failure.

Murphy: Obviously these mechanistic programs would fail. Let's consider some of the broader effects of second-language programs; for example, how much language is necessary for academic work or life purposes?

Imhoof: Unfortunately, we can't say with certainty how much language is necessary for a given task. You can't quantify language, but in the United States and in places like AUC, we have considerable experience and success in preparing students for academic programs conducted in a second language. But since language ability correlates with neither overall intellectual ability nor academic achievement, the amount of language proficiency necessary to earn good grades can only be estimated.

Murphy: Since there isn't any direct correlation, how well do the exams predict whether a student can do the work you want?

Imhoof: We can test proficiency pretty well, but we can't say precisely how this will affect the learner's performance in spheres other than language learning. There are too many variables for us to predict what level of language is necessary. For example, how are we to measure how much English or French a hotel clerk in Cairo needs? How much English does an air traffic controller in New Delhi need? How much English does a technician in the oil fields of Iran need? Despite the proliferation of courses addressed to such audiences, there is no adequate measure of the proficiency level required in any one of these occupations. As our profession tries to respond to the specialized needs of second-language programs abroad, more and more attention is being paid to the kind and amount of language necessary for particular tasks.

It seems to me that language programs in general have had difficulty in trying to respond to societal changes and academic needs. Rhetoric and composition programs must have met similar difficulties and suffered some of the same decline in reputation in these rapidly changing times.

Murphy: Traditional rhetoric programs have a split reputation. Many people who have had little or no experience with either second-language or rhetoric programs consider the latter "intellectual," "substantial," "abstruse," and "directed to high purpose"—probably because in some vague way they associate rhetoric with Cicero, Francis Bacon, the art of persuasion, university-level education, and Truth. On the other hand, many students consider their composition courses boring, uncreative, something to be endured, and many literature teachers groan at the idea of teaching writing to freshmen.

Imhoof: This sounds like a case of split personality. Which opinion is right?

Murphy: Neither seems correct. We must recognize that during the last fifteen years or so administrators have dissolved rhetoric programs completely or watered them down into minimum literature-appreciation/composition requirements, either because they were not productive or because society did not value what they were doing. Right now I'm speaking generally of American institutions where rhetoric programs have turned out, at every educational level, graduates who cannot organize and who have little or no respect for language or communication.

Imhoof: If you turn these failures around they sound like good objectives—that is, to turn out students who *can* organize, have respect for language, and so on. Why have rhetoric programs failed to achieve these important goals?

Murphy: One very important reason is that society does not respect language. Proper use of language and interest in it are not cultural values—which is ironic, because language was and is necessary for the growth of culture and for the development of the human brain. Another reason is that many people do not really seem to want to communicate, and many have never learned to listen; so the art of conversation has been lost. Another societal problem is that with the increased speed of mass media and technological discovery, people expect information and services quickly; they want fast foods, immediate results, etc. Both writing and conversation take time, and with the increased speed of life, they have become obsolete.

Imhoof: Unfortunately, one doesn't have much control over these cultural factors. We can't, and probably don't want to, reverse these changes. Is there anything we can change to achieve the goals of rhetoric programs?

Murphy: Yes, there are many things that can change or are already changing. For example, administrators' educational views, hiring practices, students' attitudes, and methodology. Educators are now distinguishing between teaching literature and teaching rhetoric. In the past, it was incorrectly assumed that if a person could teach literary analysis and appreciation, he could teach writing as well. This assumption created two problems. First, the literature teachers, naturally enough, lacked the preparation, skills, and methods required for teaching writing. Second, these literature specialists never wanted to teach rhetoric, so many of them were not serious about teaching it. I have read sets of illiterate papers that had been awarded A's and B's. My deduction from this is that the teachers either didn't want to hurt their students' feelings or didn't want to take the time to correct the papers.

Imhoof: Also, aren't teachers often put in impossible situations with poor administrative support and students who come ill-prepared for university-level work?

Murphy: That is quite true. Administrators often ask teachers in rhetoric programs to take excessively large classes. A one-to-one student-teacher relationship is necessary for students to learn to write, and if a teacher has thirty or more students in a class, meaningful conferences and individual attention become impossible. Furthermore, students themselves enter composition programs with seemingly contradictory attitudes. On the one hand, they wrongly believe that writing is easy and spontaneous—something you don't need to work at. On the other hand, they often lack confidence because they have been trained to imitate and not to initiate; therefore, they don't believe that they have anything to say.

Imhoof: Shouldn't good teaching and good materials overcome student attitudes?

Murphy: Composition classes have traditionally lacked material or content. They were artificial, in that students who did not want to learn to write were forced to communicate about topics in which they weren't interested to a teacher whom they perhaps neither trusted nor liked. There is another seemingly inherent problem with language study, especially in second-language programs, and that is the unavoidable master-slave relationship in which students soon lose hope that they will ever use the language as well as the teacher.

Imhoof: With all the problems you've articulated about rhetoric programs, which area do you feel is the most crucial and deserves most consideration in order to correct the problems?

Murphy: The most crucial area, in my opinion, is methodology. Probably the biggest reason that many rhetoric programs have failed to achieve their goals is that they have spent too much time on detail and have lost sight of the larger patterns that give spirit and significance to the communication experience. In other words, they failed at the communication level. This is similar to the pencils-and-erasers problem with second-language programs that we mentioned earlier. And this emphasis on detail has led many students to believe that expository writing is mechanical, noncreative, and irrelevant.

Imhoof: Good intensive language programs and good rhetoric programs share, at least, a focus on communication. In the academic world, we reward students who can present their ideas clearly and fluently. Certainly the students' main concern is whether they get their ideas across. We do, however, spend a lot of time in second-language programs on fundamental language use. Do you expect students entering a rhetoric program to have mastered all the sentence-level language skills?

Murphy: Rhetoric programs ideally meet language, communication, and human needs. The idea that rhetoric does not deal with basic language skills and concepts such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and punctuation is wrong. Although teaching these basics is not a major end of rhetoric, rhetoric does indeed review them and shows how they are necessary for style, rhythm, meaning, etc. Essays are not structures or organizational development alone; writers may be correct, but without intelligent and sophisticated awareness of language their work will be lifeless and insipid.

Imhoof: It seems to me what we are pointing out is a distinction between *knowledge about language* and *use of language*. In many language programs—especially rather traditional foreign-language programs—one spends a lot of time acquiring information about a language much in the same way you acquire information about geography. This is probably true in rhetoric programs as well: one learns the names of the rhetorical forms or patterns but doesn't necessarily learn to employ them in one's own writing.

The current emphasis on communication seems equally important to both language and rhetoric programs. Certainly the main goal in learning a second language is to use that language—whether in business, or politics, or education. The aim of learning rhetoric is also to use the language, but more effectively and at a more sophisticated level.

Murphy: Probably rhetoric's main goal is *clarity*. People write—except those few who write for themselves—to be read; they want to persuade, to inform, to explain, to get some kind of reader response. Rhetoric shows students how to reason effectively. When they learn to synthesize, they learn organizational skills; and when they learn to analyze, they learn to support and to develop ideas.

Imhoof: It's obvious that many of the aims of second-language and rhetoric programs are similar. It would be most useful to view rhetoric simply as higher-level language structure. In much the same way that phonological rules of a language govern meaningful combinations of sounds and grammatical rules govern meaningful combinations of words, rhetorical rules govern meaningful combinations of sentences, paragraphs, and larger language units.

The difference between language and rhetoric programs is only one of emphasis. In language programs the emphasis is on the lower-level skills involving the sound system and the grammar system. Naturally we're interested in having learners put sentences together in connected discourse, but the focus is on basic communicability. In rhetoric programs the emphasis is on higher-level skills involving the complex organizational patterns of more formal language, especially written language used in education.

Murphy: An awareness of the complexity and potential of language is one of the benefits of language and rhetoric study. The study of rhetoric, for instance, teaches self-awareness. Very young children use organizational techniques by imitating the ways in which their parents organize the environment. People use chronological order, classification, comparison, contrast, induction, and deduction long before they take a rhetoric course. The rhetoric course gives them labels for the techniques they already know, as well as the knowledge and discipline to refine them in order to communicate to others and to live well.

Imhoof: Good education—that is, education that fulfills human needs—presents the learner with alternative strategies for solving life's problems. The study of language is a good exemplification of this concept. As you expand your vocabulary, you have appropriate alternatives for conceptualizing and labeling; as you grasp increasingly complex grammar, you have alternative styles of expression; as you learn rhetorical principles, you have the power to shape your listener's or reader's thoughts. When you learn a second language you compound all these alternatives, because you acquire another language system.

Murphy: Rhetoric meets your good-education requirement in that it gives people rational alternatives for structuring and developing ideas that they can apply to life situations. The ability to gather information, to weigh and consider that information, to choose a rhetorical pattern, to organize it, and to develop generalities by particular example enables the rhetoric student to communicate effectively with his friends, his employer, or his employees. This ability enables him also to write reports, plan projects, or compose a letter to the editor. Further, the good rhetoric student can recognize language manipulation in propaganda and deceptive advertising. The person who has had training in rhetoric has learned to collect information, to consider it, to select and reject ideas, and to present a logically consistent point of view. This person can, for example, use these same techniques to be not only an intellectually but also an emotionally consistent parent, or chairman of the board, or judge.

Imhoof: There is a basic human need to impose order or structure on our world. We have an amazing ability to recognize patterns and to abstract from the myriad stimuli an overall order. Language is one of the most observable structural systems. I think the study of language—from the lowest-level beginning language class to the highest-level study of literary stylistics—is the most relevant of the humanities.

Murphy: Rhetoric and second-language programs obviously have many of the same goals, although they emphasize different levels in the communication process. What can we do to improve their images and their effectiveness?

Imhoof: One way to improve the image of second-language programs is to correct the idea that they are simple-minded and childish because they treat the basics of language learning. Unless students have a cognitive grasp of basics, they will never be able to handle language on a more complex, more sophisticated level where they can create the appropriate language to respond to unexpected situations. Many of our critics, simply passing by the language classroom, misinterpret our overall aims as well as our methods.

Murphy: Rhetoric programs suffer from another kind of misinterpretation, in that many people enter writing courses with the idea that writing is easy, a natural talent. People generally assume that composition does not have to be learned. Since they can speak, they can write. They seem to have forgotten that learning to speak, like learning to walk, is a difficult, time-consuming process, which requires attention and continual practice. So is learning to write.

Imhoof: How do you develop the students' initiative to write at the same time you show them it's a difficult task?

Murphy: Confidence is the most important factor for student initiative and success in writing. Many students enter writing courses with false confidence because, as we just mentioned, they think that writing is easy. However, after their first essays have been corrected, and they are fully convinced that their work did not communicate, they lose confidence. Many of them become perplexed and disheartened when confronted with the multitudinous alternatives for expression which rhetoric offers. After they lose confidence students may believe they have nothing to say, or that they will never be able to write. Self-confidence is essential for anyone who is learning to write, so I try to convince students that they know and feel things that are worth saying, and that with study and practice they will be able to say them well.

Imhoof: I suppose students are afraid to write. I know I am. I always have the fear that I won't be able to say exactly what I want to.

Murphy: In the beginning, students have exactly the opposite fear. Many students, after they have gotten to know me, admit that they are afraid of being too clear in their expression. There is a lot of risk involved in telling your ideas and thoughts to another. Because of this risk many of them "keep their reader in suspense" by stating their theme either at the very end of their essay or not at all. They also deliberately use the passive voice excessively, because indirect expression is comfortable for them.

Imhoof: This fear is similar to the second-language learner's fear of making errors. He never speaks unless forced to, mumbles his answers, and chooses the simplest structures he is absolutely confident of. How do you help the learner to overcome his fears in using the language?

Murphy: One help is to find a viable audience for the composition student. People quite reasonably do not want to write to those teachers who perhaps are not interested in what they say and who oftentimes read the papers solely to correct and to grade them. No one wants to write in a negatively critical atmosphere. One solution is to use already existing audiences. For example, students can write for the college newspaper or other in-house publication. Another alternative, although this is not possible for most composition classes, is to offer elective courses in which students write to have their articles published in local, regional, or national publications. Another means to avoid mechanical, teacher-directed writing is to have the students discuss what they are writing about with each other in class. Through these discussions, students learn that they have many problems in common, and they also learn from each other how to solve them. These conversations generate an atmosphere of trust and mutual interest.

Imhoof: These seem very good general guidelines: bolster the student's confidence, have him write about something relevant to himself, help him create a climate of trust between himself and his reader. These translate very nicely into principles for second-language programs, too. One of the most difficult things to accomplish is to make the teacher a communicator rather than an evaluator or judge.

Murphy: One means of making the teacher a communicator is to discuss the mechanical nature of enforced writing assignments and an artificial audience candidly with the class. Once the students realize that the teacher is not pretending that they want to be there writing essays to someone they don't know, they usually relax and are more ready to listen to the valid reasons for studying rhetoric.

Imhoof: Once the teacher becomes a communicator, and the atmosphere is relaxed, how do you make the students communicators as well?

Murphy: By giving them the direction to find topics they are interested in and want to write about. Once they are interested in writing about a subject, they have the initiative to learn the techniques of rhetoric to express their ideas. To engender this interest I have students choose their own topics. Also I generally allow students to write, in my class, papers that are assigned in other classes. After all, I am primarily interested in form and expression, not content. I never grade papers, and I try to make all my comments constructive and positive. For example, I avoid using terms such as "awkward," "underdeveloped," or "illogical" on papers.

Imhoof: I hope we don't give the impression that once one has learned grammar and rhetoric every attempt to communicate will be successful and the speaker or writer will live happily ever after! Do you think we can really teach writing?

Murphy: I don't think that we can "teach" writing. We can do only two things. First, we can help to create an atmosphere of mutual ease and trust. Second, we can enter into the student's writing process by suggesting alternative methods of expression on all language levels. When students learn some of these methods, they recognize the value of revision. All of us are limited as human beings, and our first attempts at anything are often faulty. Realizing your limitations, in the Greek sense of *sophrosyne*, is a means of enlarging your capacities and of helping to perfect your awareness and achievement as a person. When the teacher enters the writing process, students learn something about the give-and-take nature of education. Teaching is like marriage in that the teacher and each student must contribute one hundred percent. If one party gives less, the course has a good chance of failing.

Imhoof: To me, rhetoric is the natural culmination of any language program. The learner grows from zero language ability, through a stage in which he is largely a receiver, through another stage in which he is a participator, and finally to a level where he is a leader—that is, he not only takes part in events; he also shapes and directs them.

Murphy: Students should be aware that writing classes are not just service courses which either fulfill requisites or prepare them only to do academic work. In these classes they learn to think and to express their thoughts to benefit themselves and society. Many people have good ideas but cannot express them because they do not have the proper form. Substance without form is tragic, because it goes unrespected and unheeded.

Imhoof: How can students put form to their shapeless or half-formed ideas? Once they've learned some of the rules of language—such as grammar and rhetoric—how can the teacher help them to put these rules into practice?

Murphy: You have to give students the freedom to experiment. Students will undoubtedly make errors when they apply these rules to their writing; and when they do so, the good reader will correct the errors in language but will also praise and emphasize successful use of overall rhetorical patterns. It is very discouraging for the student who becomes interested in a topic, has good ideas about it, becomes genuinely excited about expressing these ideas, and tries his best to write well to get a paper back from a reader who has marked all the misspellings, tense inconsistencies, and punctuation errors but has ignored the honest and partially successful effort to communicate and has neglected to offer alternative means of expression. Attention to both language-level skills and broader communication patterns is necessary.

Imhoof: The ability to communicate is man's salvation as a social animal and his sanity as an individual. Learning how to communicate effectively through the conscious and purposeful study of language and rhetoric can not only satisfy immediate needs in education and work, but can also provide the means for carrying on a dialogue with the world. □

Putting Variety Into Dictation

THOMAS M. SPEER
King Faisal University

Thomas M. Speer teaches at the English Language Center of the University of Pittsburgh, where he is pursuing studies toward a Ph.D. in applied linguistics. He recently completed two years of teaching at King Faisal University, in Saudi Arabia, during which time he wrote the article on these pages. It originally appeared in *English in New Guinea*, No. 5 (Nov. 1970). Mr. Speer has also taught at the American Language Institute of San Francisco State University and, before becoming interested in TEFL, served as a lecturer in composition as a graduate student at California State University, Fresno.

The purpose of this article is to convey, first, the value that dictation has in the ESL/EFL classroom, and second, some ways its value and applicability can be increased by varying its form. Underlying this is the strong belief that variety—a certain amount of surprise and unpredictability—is an essential quality of excellent teaching, especially of ESL/EFL. In order to establish a point of reference, I will first briefly describe the situation of the first-year English program at King Faisal University, and the rationale coming out of it for the use of dictation. I will then describe the varieties of dictation we have employed.

Before I came to Saudi Arabia to teach, I knew that Saudi students love to talk—even in English. For someone schooled in the oral, pattern practice method of teaching English, this is a definite advantage. Not only do they love to talk, but they also enjoy dialogues, songs, and plays—all of which we in the English program have used. However, they apparently don't love to write—at least in English. And at the university level, where English is the language of instruction, reading, listening comprehension, and writing are equally as important as speaking, if not more so.

We have had to cope with special difficulties with regard to writing. Because Arabic script is written from right to left and with downward strokes, our students have difficulty in writing rapidly and legibly in English; much of this is simply because of their not having developed the necessary motor skills. Because Arabic does not in most cases have vowel indicators, students tend to be confused by the English vowel system—as evidenced by their ineptness in spelling. Also, Arabic does not use capital letters, and it has fewer punctuation symbols than English. In summary, because of the interference of the native language, the elementary aspects of penmanship, punctuation, and spelling present major problems for Arab student. These basic skills are particularly important at the university level, where students are expected to write legible notes rapidly while listening to lectures, and produce coherent and readable papers.

With our more advanced students, we rely on a variety of controlled composition exercises, followed by précis writing and guided composition. With our intermediate and lower-level students, we first emphasize accurate written representation in a variety of exercises in conjunction with both reading and writing classes. One of the most effective tools we have found is dictation.

Dictation, if properly varied, can provide practice in several skills—listening comprehension, vocabulary building, and reading speed and comprehension, as well as elementary aspects of handwriting, punctuation, spelling, and composition formation. Certain types of dictation also lend themselves to the grammar class. We have found dictation particularly useful with our students because it provides practice in a variety of skills concurrently, several of which—particularly listening comprehension and basic writing skills—are at once their weakest areas and the areas most important for their future endeavors at the university.

A criticism commonly made of dictation is that it is a "passive" exercise. This is not a valid objection, even as it relates to the basic, "standard" dictation, which requires of the student active listening and practice in writing, spelling, vocabulary building, and punctuation, as well as the important (albeit difficult to measure) gradual subconscious grasp of English rhythm and intonation. In any case, the varieties of dictation included below require progressively more active participation on the part of the student.

VARIETIES OF DICTATION

The standard dictation

In the standard dictation, the teacher selects a short passage of one or two paragraphs, with vocabulary and syntax appropriate to the level of the students. The passage may be a very short tale, a dialogue, or expository prose. The instructor lists on the board, preferably before the class begins, proper names and words which the students cannot be expected to know. He reads the passage at a normal speed and with normal intonation. He then reads the passage in short phrasal segments. The segments should be short enough for the slowest students to understand and write down, but the teacher should not get bogged down in unnatural word combinations or in repeating individual words. The reading speed and amount of repetition of the segments depends on the difficulty of the passage and the level of the students. However, every student should be able to keep up with the dictation. The teacher finally rereads the passage at a normal speed with students reviewing their written work. Alternatively, the teacher may call on students to read individual sentences of the dictation.

The instructor then collects and grades the dictation. If necessary, he may sometimes collect and grade the papers and at other times allow the students to correct their own by referring them to the written passage, thereby reinforcing their reading skills. We have found it important that we frequently correct and grade the dictations ourselves, simply because our students have great difficulty in perceiving their errors, especially in spelling and punctuation, even when they have the correct copy in front of them. We rapidly circle the errors and total them. When we hand back the corrected sheets, we refer the students to the dictation passage so that they can check our circled corrections. Often we then say to the students, "You have five minutes to look over your errors and compare them with the passage. Then we will have the same dictation again." The rationale for this is that it is on the *second* or the *third* reading of the dictation that much of the learning takes place. This general rule also holds true for the other varieties of dictation described in the following paragraphs. It is, however, important that at each point the student should be aware of his previous errors and see his improvement.

The preassigned dictation

In the preassigned dictation, students are given the passage or referred to the passage in their textbook. They are told to study it for a dictation on the following day. By doing this the student learns the vocabulary and spelling beforehand, at his own speed. This type of dictation makes a valuable homework assignment.

Dictation with timed readings beforehand

In dictation with timed readings beforehand, the students are first allowed to read the passage for a set, short period of time. Then they are told to put the written passage away, and they are given the dictation in the same manner as the standard dictation. The value of this exercise is that, by controlling the length of the passage and the time that students have to study it, the students are forced to read quickly, and to attempt to guess at word meanings from the context. This type of forced rapid reading gets students away from plodding "dictionary," "translation" reading. The skill of guessing word meaning from the context is an essential reading skill, one which students *must* acquire before they can read effectively. Also, this type of exercise is useful in increasing students' general reading speed.

Dictations with cloze materials

A dictation with cloze materials can be used for testing, for practice in listening comprehension, or in conjunction with teaching a particular grammatical structure. "Cloze" materials may be either random or grammatically based. With random cloze materials, words are *randomly omitted* from the passage. Thus, for example, every seventh word may be omitted. The more frequently words are omitted from the passage, the more difficult the exercise is for the student. With grammatically based cloze materials particular grammatical items, such as articles, prepositions, or auxiliary verbs, are omitted.

In dictations using cloze materials, the teacher reads the passage several times at a normal speed. Then the passage is given to the students in its "cloze" form, with words omitted either randomly or because they are manifestations of a particular grammatical structure. Dictation exercises with random cloze passages are valuable for both practice and testing in reading and listening comprehension. Again, as in the dictation with timed reading beforehand, the student is required to guess at the correct word from context. Such practice is invaluable for improvement in contextual reading. Note that in this exercise students should be required to fill in the *exact* word, not an approximation.

Dictation exercises using grammatically based cloze passages are useful in teaching English structure. They can test whether or not students have mastered a particular structure. They have the added benefit of taking the grammatical point being taught out of a single sentence repetition framework and putting it into a larger context. They are particularly useful as quick gauges of improvement: by using such cloze-test dictations before and after a particular structural point is introduced to the students, both the teacher and the students can see the improvement that has been made.

The "dicto-comp"

The "dicto-comp" has been thoroughly defined and described by Pamela M. Riley:

> The dicto-comp is a passage of one or more paragraphs that the teacher reads to the class several times in its entirety. Then the students give it back as accurately as they can, using the identical words and constructions as far as they are able to—and filling in with their own words only when their memory of the dicto-comp falters. To the extent that they reproduce the original passage, the students are writing a dictation. To the extent that they must use their own words to fill memory gaps, they are writing something akin to a composition.[1]

For the majority of intermediate-level students it is essential that aids such as outlines, key vocabulary words, and transition words be supplied. Without such aids, intermediate students will simply not be able to do this exercise. Also, it is important that the passages read to the students be neither too long nor too complex, so that the students will not be totally confounded when they are asked to write down what they have heard. The teacher can avoid problems with this exercise by starting with quite simple passages and progressing to more complex ones. This exercise is particularly useful for introducing students to some basic aspects of composition writing. Thus, for example, instead of wasting time explaining what an outline is, the teacher simply gives the outline and creates a situation in which the outline is very helpful to the student. By using it, the student learns its value and its form.

As an alternative to the oral dicto-comp, the instructor may wish to do the same exercise in conjunction with timed reading. That is, students are given a set amount of time to read a passage, then must put it away and attempt to write what they have read as accurately as possible. Again, the teacher should begin this exercise with very simple passages and gradually have the students rewrite more lengthy and complex ones; also, he should supply "hints" such as outlines and key vocabulary words.

Dictation with following grammar exercises

Sentence dictation and *passage dictation* are two types of dictation that are useful in conjunction with grammar exercises. In sentence dictation, when a grammatical point is the focus, the teacher says to the students, "I am going to read you some sentences. I want you to write down the sentences, but change [for example] the verb from the present to the past tense." The teacher then *gives several examples* to ensure that the students understand what is expected. Then a set number of sentences are read and the students write them, making the desired transformation while they are writing. The teacher may repeat *the same* sentences, but ask the students to write them in the present continuous, or make them negative, or make them questions. But each time a different transformation is required of the students, the teacher supplies several examples.

In passage dictation, the teacher reads the dictation in the same way as in a standard dictation; however, the students are asked to transform some structural aspect of the dictation *while they are writing it down*. This kind of dictation requires a great deal of preparation on the part of the instructor in order to avoid having the students produce artificial or awkward sentences. In this type of dictation, it is again important that adequate examples be supplied, so that students know what is expected of them. Because this is a relatively complex set of tasks, the teacher might be wise to begin this exercise at a very simple level (for example, change the present tense to the past) and progress to more complicated passages and tranformations (for example, change from the active to the passive voice).

The value of both of these types of exercises is that, as with the previous varieties of dictation, they give students practice concurrently in several different skills. In this case, while they are working with particular grammatical structures and transformations, students are getting continual added practice in aural comprehension and basic writing skills as well.

SOME PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

Since I have written here at length about providing variety, I thought I might end this with a note about what I consider to be an essential quality of a good teacher of English to foreign students.

We often say that "variety is the spice of life"—it is what keeps life interesting. Well, if this is true of life, it is even more true of the English instruction classroom. I tell my students—and I think this is true—that learning a second language, like English, is similar to learning to play a musical instrument: at first it may seem terribly complex and sometimes boring. Steps are involved, including considerable practice, practice, practice, and memorization, that are not interesting for anyone except the rare linguist.

However, I also tell them an end is in sight, a goal: the successful mastery of a second language is as enjoyable and rewarding a skill as the mastery of a musical instrument. And once a student is to the point where he can comfortably speak and think in the second language, he will find that all his past boredom and frustration were not so important.

But there remains, despite all of these encouraging words, the present dreary fact that, at least at first, learning a second language is for many of our students both difficult

continued on page 35

---

[1] Pamela M. Riley, "The Dicto-Comp," in *The Art of TESOL*, part two (Washington, D.C.: *English Teaching Forum*, 1975), p. 238. (Reprinted from *English Teaching Forum*, *10*, 1 (January–February 1972).

A Paper-Scrap Approach to Internalizing Language Structures

Kim Haeng Jung
Choong Nam Girls' High School
Korea

Kim Haeng Jung teaches English at Choong Nam Girls' High School, Daejon, Korea. He holds a diploma in teaching English as a second language from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, which he attended as a recipient of a Colombo Plan award. Mr. Kim is author of *Love and Life in Girls' High School*, which contains amusing short dialogues for students of English, and *The Other Side of the Coin*, a book of humorous essays related to high-school students and "written to arouse the interest of learners of English."

It is interesting to observe the way most of our students memorize an English word: they repeatedly jot down every letter of it. This observation impelled me to do a couple of simple statistical studies.

I divided a class into two groups (A and B). I then distributed two small pieces of paper to each student and told them to write *eye* at the top of one piece of paper and *hand* at the top of the other. I told them that I was going to compare the results that the two groups would produce in memorizing a list of words from the blackboard, and I asked them to do their best at the task.

There were two rounds. In the first round, I told Group A that they must memorize the words with "eyes" only; and I told Group B that they must memorize the words by jotting them down—that is, by using their hands. I told the students to close their eyes while I wrote on the board a group of nonsense words (made up of consonant clusters),[1] so that they couldn't look at the words in advance. Then I gave them five minutes to memorize the words. I told Group A to hold their hands so that they couldn't use or move them while they were memorizing the words with their "eyes" only. After five minutes, I removed the blackboard list and told them to write the words on the paper and hand them in. In the second round the two groups switched, Group A using "hands" and Group B using "eyes." Diagram 1 shows the results.

Diagram 1

	Group A (24 students)		Group B (25 students)	
1st round	hands		eyes	
	total score[2]	average score[3]	total score	average score
	107	4.458	103	4.12
2nd round	eyes		hands	
	total score	average score	total score	average score
	81	3.375	92	3.68

---

[1] The nonsense words used in the first round: 1. stdk 2. rpkj 3. pwsr 4. ytvx 5. tbds 6. rcsk 7. spqt 8. dfkj 9. vcrg. The nonsense words used in the second round: 1. ndvh 2. slqm 3. xwtv 4. rdpl 5. cgfv 6. tqrv 7. dkjl 8. vgrc 9. npbr.

[2] Total score = number of words correctly recalled by all students in the group.

[3] Average score = average number of words correctly recalled per student in the group.

In the first round the average score of the group using hands was 0.338 points above the group using only their eyes. Again, in the second round, the group that used their hands was 0.305 points above that of the "eye" group. These simple statistics may indicate that there is some benefit in having the students touch things or change things by using their hands while they are learning.

Flannel board vs. paper scraps

In order to help their students understand sentence patterns, many teachers use a flannel board to show changes in the position of the words. After thus illustrating the word-order changes, a thoughtful teacher may have a few students come forward and use the flannel board to repeat what he has done, thinking that the physical experience of changing the positions of the words by using their hands will impress it more clearly upon them. While the lucky few are doing this, however, all the rest must watch with "eyes" only. This is not uncommon in situations where a class has more than sixty students.

However, since the bigger the class, the more difficult it is to allow for individual participation (which is indispensable in learning a language), a method is needed which will give the students an opportunity to do things themselves, using their own hands—such as arranging word cards. This individualization of classroom activity is probably the single most important factor in language acquisition.

At the same time, if we accept the common belief that learning is more effective in situations where the learners are interested in each other's work, something other than the flannel-board method (which provides only scanty opportunity for cooperation and concern among the learners as neighbors) is certainly desirable.

In this regard, it may be helpful to note H.V. George's comments about neighborly relationships in classroom situations:

> Children's interest in each other can be used by arranging work for pairs and groups. Much work which is traditionally done individually can be more efficiently shared. Concern with marks brings with it a strange attitude towards cooperation among the children. For many teachers, copying from another child is bad. This is unreasonable. If a child can get information from another child, learn with the help of another child, so much the better.
>
> Any child who has learnt something, who can do something, can be a teacher. He will strengthen his own knowledge and skill by helping others, so he will not be the loser—if this matters! The orders "Do your own work," "Keep your eyes on your own work" show that a teacher has not thought out the problem of attention and distraction in his classroom. What normal child is not interested in his neighbour's work? Making him keep his eyes on his own work changes a focus of attention into a focus of distraction! Besides, if we want children to be good neighbours and to cooperate when they grow up, they should surely experience the advantage of neighbourly attitudes when they are at school. We need not worry about a pupil who is interested and does not want to be distracted: he is quite able to make other children understand that he does not wish to be distracted.[4]

He interprets the relationship of neighbors in the classroom in terms of attention and distraction. And this is reasonable and important.

In light of this, and the shortcomings of the flannel-board method mentioned above for internalizing language structure, a solution may be the "paper-scrap approach," which incorporates individual participation, the use of motor nerves, and cooperation among the learners.

In using this approach, I did not find it necessary to organize the class into pairs or groups (as George suggested) to force them into cooperation, because this drill can be done in such a way that the learners are interested in each other's work while they are arranging their scraps. Let's look at an example:

Structure to be practiced:

He uttered a word

whose meaning I did not understand.
the meaning of which I did not understand.
of which I did not understand *the meaning*.
which I did not understand *the meaning of*.
I did not understand *the meaning of*.[5]

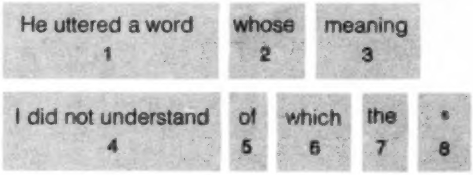
First, I asked the students to number the patterns, yielding:

He uttered a word

(1) *whose meaning* I did not understand.
(2) *the meaning of which* I did not understand.
(3) *of which* I did not understand *the meaning*.
(4) *which* I did not understand *the meaning of*.
(5) I did not understand *the meaning of*.

Then I asked them to take out a piece of paper and to tear it into small narrow strips. The students wondered what this paper-tearing business had to do with learning English, but they playfully did as I told them. I told each student to write a word or group of words on each scrap of paper (as shown in Diagram 2) and display them randomly on her desk.

Diagram 2



---

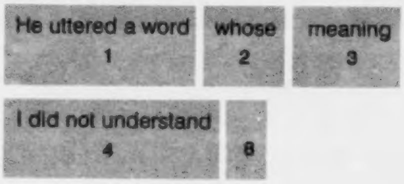
[4] H.V. George, *Note on Motivation, Attention, Distraction, Fatigue* (The English Language Institute, University of Wellington, New Zealand, 1974), p. 6.

[5] From the English Textbook Compilation Committee's ***Volume 3: High School English II*** (Seoul: Hangug Textbook Publishing Co.), p. 40 (slightly modified).

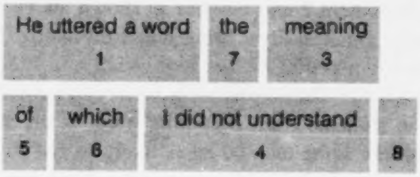
[6] The numbers shown here on the paper scrap are not used in class activities, for if used, they would be an obstacle to learning.

The reason scraps 1 and 4 each contain a phrase instead of a word is that those phrases don't change in this exercise. By doing it this way, we can avoid confusion when changing the positions of words. This is how it goes:

Step 1: The teacher says:"Number 1 pattern."
The students arrange their scraps like this:

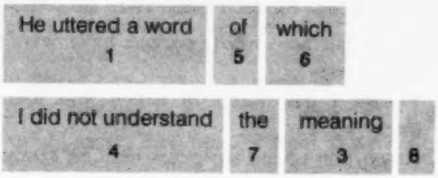


Step 2: Teacher:"Number 2 pattern."
Student:



(At each stage the teacher may give some grammatical explanations, if necessary.)

Step 3: Teacher: "Number 3."
Student:

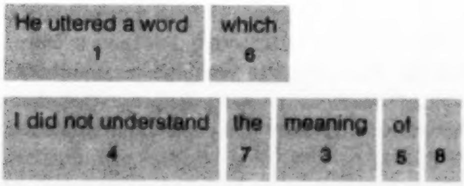


(At this stage the teacher may emphasize the grammatical fact that scraps 7 and 3 are placed after the verb *understand*.

Step 4: Teacher: "Number 2 (or 3)" [repeat]
Student: (arranges the paper scraps according to pattern 2 or pattern 3)

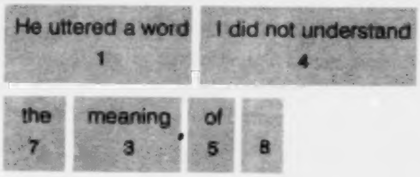
Since the purpose of this drill is to get the students accustomed to the patterns, the teacher should go back to the previous numbers as much as possible.

Step 5: Teacher: "Number 4."
Student:



This stage can be explained in a humorous way to brighten up the atmosphere: As the phrase *the meaning* gets a "divorce" from the word *which*, the word *of* "betrays" the word *which* by following the phrase *the meaning*. This humor helps a great deal to motivate the students, especially if they are high-school students. The humor is climaxed in the following step where the lonely divorcee, *which*, commits suicide (that is, is omitted).

Step 6: Teacher: "Number 5."
Student:



Since drills are thinking activities, too, excessive emphasis should not be placed on oral repetition step after step with this approach. When all the six steps are finished, the teacher tells the students to do the drills *once again*, and adds that they will do the drills a third time with their books closed.

After they have finished the second round—that is, practicing drills while looking at the book—the teacher asks them to close their books and do the drills alone. Finally, to insure that the students are attentive, the teacher may time them. In my experience this method has been tremendously successful. Even the students who are disgracefully branded as hopeless show interest in arranging the paper scraps. They know that there is a meaning to their activities there in the classroom.

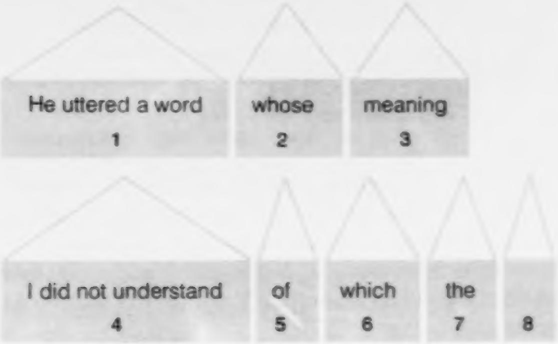
The reason this kind of method is successful is that the students don't just sit, hear, and mimic what their teacher utters, but they participate individually and arrange the paper scraps using their hands. At the same time, they can compare the order in which they are arranging the scraps with that of their neighbors. As is commonly said, meaningful labor gives them pleasure. Furthermore, this kind of drill is not very time-consuming, and it does help to lead the students to the goal of being able to produce the patterns orally.

There are times when a dramatic approach is necessary to inject vitality into lessons for tired foreign-language students. Simple English songs are often useful for this purpose. However, in specific situations when the teacher and the students have been involved in doing drills, the method the teacher uses to provide vitality should relate to the drills in order to inculcate the substance of the lesson more deeply. In other words, it should in all respects be part of the drills.

It may therefore be wise for the teacher to put the finishing touches on this paper-scrap approach by dramatization.

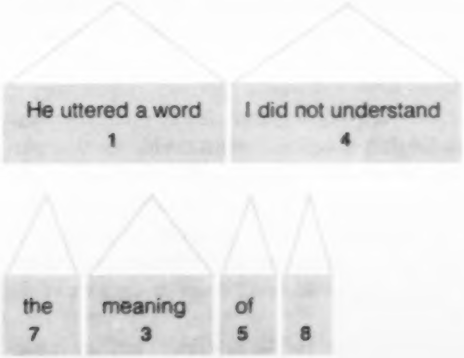
This is the method I use:

The teacher prepares word cards and attaches a piece of string to each one in advance as follows:

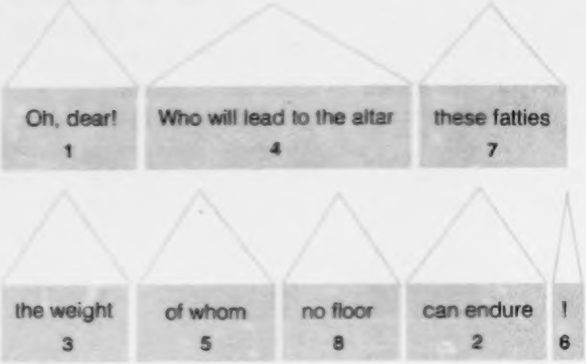


After the paper-scrap drills are over, the teacher asks eight students to come forward, and has each one hang a card around her neck. They are told to stand on the platform in a row. As the teacher calls out numbers, the students must change positions to make complete sentences. The student who is wearing card 5 (*of*) will experience chaotic confusion if she hasn't fully memorized the word order, because the word *of* changes its position almost every time a new number is called out. This arouses the interest of the class.

There are many comical aspects to this activity. Think of the student who is wearing number 8! However, the climax does not come until the teacher asks them to turn their cards over. As this drill ends at pattern number 5 they are arranged in this order:



The students turn their cards over. The class may then see a sentence that reads:



In case the sentence is long, it is good to have other students—numbers 2 and 6—join as shown above. This kind of sentence can easily "bring down the house" when the class is composed of high-school girls.

The teacher should prepare a variety of activities to prevent the students from becoming tired. If he always falls back on the same method he is likely to fail as a teacher. And it isn't only the students who are affected by this problem of monotony; it may be even more important to the teacher, since if he is in charge of ten classes, as I am, he may quickly tire of doing exactly the same thing in all of the ten classes.

One way for the teacher to avoid monotony is to use a different sentence for each class. Here are some examples:

1. Don't date boys *whose pockets* have never been filled with money.
2. I wish I had wings *of which* you had made *the feathers*.
3. Boys, don't send us letters we don't understand *the meaning of*.

   Etc.

Notice that each sentence given as an example illustrates the patterns the students have practiced with their scraps. So you can call this a kind of extension drill. Teachers may react negatively to the idea of using sentences like these, the contents of which are obviously somewhat unorthodox. However, considering that they contribute drama to the situation, it should be the teacher's prerogative to use them if he sees fit.

Other examples

The teacher must be judicious in using this method, and he should employ it according to the ability of the students and the nature of the structure they have to learn. It is advisable for the teacher to combine the approach with other available methods. Now let me present another example to show how differently this paper-scrap approach can be applied.

Structures to be practiced:

(1) What do you have in your hand?

The deep structure of this sentence is *You have (something) in your hand*. This structure is usually learned in the second half of the first year of the middle school in Korea. The paper-scrap drill can be practiced as follows:

Step 1:

(front side)

You	have	a ball	in your hand		
1	2	3	4	5	6

(back side)

you		What		?	do
1	2	3	4	5	6

Step 2:

What	do	you	have	in your hand	?
3	6	1	2	4	5
back	*back*	*back*	*front*	*front*	*back*

In this step, the students can experience two radical changes in sentence structure: the change of position of scrap 3 (*What*) and the introduction of scrap 6 (*do*) after scrap 3.

(2) That's what I don't understand.

This paper-scrap approach can be effectively used in teaching composition. Of course, the teacher should have in mind what pattern he is going to teach in advance. The teacher tells the students to close their books and prepare several scraps of paper; then he tells them to write exactly what he says. He calls out words at random, such as *what*, *I*, *don't*, *that's*, *understand*, "period" (punctuation mark). So the students have the following word scraps in a line on their desks.

what	I	don't	that's	understand	

The teacher then tells them to rearrange their scraps so that they make a complete sentence. If necessary, the teacher can give a hint or two to lighten their burden, such as saying that the word *that's* should start with a capital letter, or he can make the drill harder by adding a word or two that is not needed to make a complete sentence. A thoughtful teacher may judge whether this structure should be explained grammatically in advance or whether he should put the students in a quandary by not giving the advance information or knowledge of the structure, so that the students can learn through a trial-and-error experience.

Conclusion

I have tried to show that the paper-scrap approach can serve as a way to arouse interest in doing structure drills, especially transformation drills as shown in this paper, through engaging the students actively in using their hands as well as their eyes, and that at the same time this method can individualize the students' learning time, which is so important in learning a foreign language.

As is often the case with other techniques for practicing language structure, such as the flannel board, this paper-scrap approach may be most effective in drilling basic structures.

In view of the fact that the teacher must always try to develop new teaching methods, the paper-scrap approach should be considered as one possible technique to avoid monotony and to arouse continuous motivation. I have tried to emphasize that the teacher must be judicious in applying this technique; otherwise, like other available techniques, it might lose its effectiveness. □

Putting Variety Into Dictation continued from page 30

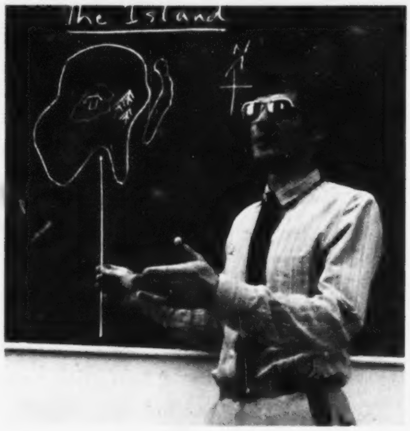
and boring. How can we stimulate our students? How can we help them get through the difficult transition from being students of a second language to participants in it? One of the answers to this question is variety.

The average person's attention span falters within about twenty minutes, even with the most interesting topic and speaker. The successful English instructor keeps this in mind. He is like a magician; he carries with him a whole bag of tricks, of language-teaching activities, and, depending on the mood and the feelings of his students, he pulls them out. This is not to say that there should be no continuity in the classroom; obviously, a syllabus, a plan, textbooks, etc.—the essential elements of continuity—are necessary both for the teacher and the student. But the successful instructor has more for the class to do, and more things to teach, than he has time for. He is overprepared. And his "tricks," while they all have the same basic aim—to help his students learn English—vary in their degree of seriousness and challenge. By providing a variety of activities, by establishing warm rapport with his students, by showing a real and deep concern for their learning, and by providing an atmosphere that is serious but not dull, and which in fact is often amusing and fun, the English instructor can overcome any of the initial monotony of his subject. □

Oral Fluency Training and Small Groups

NORMAN F. DAVIES
University of Linköping, Sweden

Norman F. Davies is Head of the English section of the Department of Language and Literature, University of Linköping, Sweden. He is the founder and editor of *System*, the international journal of educational technology and language learning systems (Pergamon Press) and General Secretary of the AILA Commission for Educational Technology and Language Learning (CETaLL). He has published widely in the field of language teaching methodology and also specializes in modern English poetry and drama. Professor Davies is at present conducting a research program into the effects of an initial concentration on receptive skills in foreign language learning.



Since the audiolingual approach became the accepted orthodoxy in language teaching, the main emphasis has been laid on training to talk. Subsequent modifications to audiolingual theory have done little to change the order of priorities. The imbalance in skills which has resulted from the narrow identification of communication with speech has been pointed out elsewhere,[1] and need not be gone into here. That learning to talk the target language is the major goal of many students is undeniable, however. What methods, then, can best serve to train this skill when the appropriate stage has been reached?

Accuracy and fluency

The type of oral training most frequently used in the classroom is probably still the question-and-answer session based on a text, which has often been prepared for homework. The inadequacies of this approach from the point of view of speech training are obvious. By far the most active person in the room is the teacher; the individual student in a class of thirty will rarely be called on to say more than a sentence or two. It is open to serious question whether this is the best way to train for *accuracy*; there can be no doubt that the method is inadequate for training in *fluency*, which we may define as the ability to speak readily and without undue hesitation. Questions on a text usually leave little scope for creativity and present an ever-present danger of boredom. Furthermore, the activity bears little relationship to real-life situations and helps make language learning "taste of school."

I believe that training for accuracy and training for fluency are usually best dealt with separately, as there is undoubtedly a conflict between the two. When the pupil is required to concentrate on syntax and accidence, his speed of utterance and his level of discourse will almost certainly suffer. Conversely, when speed and appropriate communicative content are the objectives, the teacher must learn to grit his teeth and largely refrain from interruption. Accuracy may best be trained by discriminatory listening exercises, by written work, by drilling in various forms. Fluency can only be achieved by actual and frequent use of the language in a meaningful context. Yet, despite the supposed emphasis on oral skills, the average pupil in the language classroom is rarely given the opportunity to voice his thoughts at any length in the foreign language. As long as only one person at a time is permitted to speak in the classroom, as long as talk is largely centered on the teacher, as long as the latter feels called upon to monitor and correct pupil errors, the level of fluency achieved by the individual pupil is likely to remain low. Indeed, it may be possible for the shy or lazy pupil to go several lessons without voicing a single thought in the target language (although he may mechanically repeat a few phrases). The final stage and proof of language learning—performance—is the most difficult to provide for adequately in a conventional classroom setting of one teacher, thirty or more pupils, and forty-five-minute periods. For that reason, a student's first real-life situation calling for use of the lessons learned at school can often be a devastatingly tongue-tied experience.

---

[1] For instance, a summary of the case for giving receptive skills initial priority will be found in Norman F. Davies, *Putting Receptive Skills First: An Investigation into Sequencing in Modern Language Learning*. (Linköping: Linköping University, 1978).

The answer must surely be to deactivate the teacher and reactivate the pupils; further, to make optimal use of lesson time by having many pupils talking at once, and talking spontaneously. Only by formulating their own thoughts in the foreign language will they achieve a level of fluency beyond that of the parrot.

The language laboratory

One way of accomplishing this kind of training is to use the language laboratory and give pupils open-ended tasks to complete, such as relating the story of a cartoon strip, describing pictures, filling in one half of a conversation with the help of prompt words and phrases (the other half being prerecorded), answering recorded questions with the aid of a map, town plan, bus timetable, theater guide, or something similar. Feedback can be given, where desirable, by recorded model answers (though there is the danger that the pupil may wait to hear these or feel constrained by their presence). The essential point in fluency training is to encourage the pupil to make the best use of the resources he already has, rather than to teach him something new.

Group work in pairs

In the classroom the only practical way to allow several pupils to talk at once is through group work, and this is the main concern of this article.

The smallest group is the pair. Work in pairs can often be rewarding in the language laboratory if the relevant grouping facility is available. A possible exercise is to give one member of each pair a nonfigurative line drawing; he must then give his partner instructions that will enable him to reproduce the drawing without seeing it. It would be more fun, but less realistically possible, to give one student Meccano or Lego pieces and the other diagrammatic instructions for building a model, which he must put into words to instruct his companion.[2] Diagrams or maps can be labeled by a similar transfer of information. Such exercises can also be done in class if something (such as an atlas) is used as a screen. A test method suggested by Upshur[3] can be adapted for pair groups: One partner selects one picture from a group of pictures on a piece of paper and describes it to the other partner, who tries to recognize as quickly as possible which picture is being described. Alternatively, one partner can think of a picture and the other must ask questions to discover which one it is.

Many tasks suitable for pair groups are described in the literature; however, work in pairs has its limitations within the classroom context. Noise levels tend to rise, there are too many groups for the teacher to keep an eye on, the native language is likely to intrude, and discussion tasks rarely function well in such small groups.

The buzz group

The ideal *buzz group* (so-called because of the busy-bee noise it should produce) is composed of three to five students, four being the optimum. In most classrooms, groups of four are easily formed by students simply turning to face each other—the switch from class work to group work and back again should be achieved with a minimum of fuss and disturbance. If group work is used regularly, and introduced with a careful explanation of its purpose, the class will soon accept it as a natural activity and, on their own initiative, sort out problems caused by seating arrangements or temporary absences.

Especially with young pupils, buzz groups should first be used as interludes in a lesson, of fairly short duration. They can be employed to practice vocabulary or points of grammar, often in game form. Interrogatives or question forms can be practiced by one pupil imagining himself to be a well-known character whose identity the others must arrive at by asking various questions—how old is he, is he male or female, does he live in Europe, etc. This formula can be varied to suit many requirements. The past tense can be used if a dead person is selected for identification. The future tense could be used to discover a pupil's (real or imagined) plans for the summer holidays. Conditionals can be practiced (and a lot of merriment engendered) by the group asking each other "What would you do if (you forgot your name? teacher kissed you?)," with the students being encouraged to use their ingenuity in both questions and answers.

More connected speech than is elicited by the question-and-answer format can be produced by requiring each student in turn to describe his favorite sportsman, singer, book, place, etc., which the others have to identify. If the aim is to reinforce specific points of grammar, certain constraints can be applied: each sentence should contain an attributive adjective, the group should try to use correctly as many prepositions as possible from a given list, etc.

However, the main aim of the buzz-group format is, as aforesaid, to improve fluency, and grammar is probably best allowed to function in a naturally communicative context.

Buzz groups are most suitable as a forum for discussion. Initially, they can be given tasks of the following types: Select the best two features of this school/university/town/district/country. What have been the best two films in town this year? Where in town would you recommend that a visitor go to eat cheaply? to eat best? never to eat? The television programs for the week can be photocopied and given to each group, who must select (and be prepared to defend their choice) two programs that they absolutely must see, and two that they must avoid. What is the best way to relax for a few hours? for a week? Give first and second choice in each category. The possible tasks are legion.

---

[2] EDITOR'S NOTE: Lego pieces are plastic building blocks that can be fitted together to form a variety of constructions; Meccano pieces are metal pieces of various sizes and shapes that can be combined to construct mechanical devices.

[3] J.A. Upshur, "Productive Communicative Testing: Progress Report." In Perren and Trim, eds., *Applications of Linguistics, Selected Papers of the Second International Congress of Applied Linguistics, Cambridge 1969* (London: Cambridge University Press).

After a specified number of minutes (a time limit will encourage self-discipline) the teacher can ask each group to report its choices, which are then written on the board. If it seems desirable, a period of class discussion may be allowed on the list thus produced, or one group may be called on to explain or defend its choice. The necessity to produce some tangible result will also help to discipline the discussions.

Possibly more advanced are the following tasks, which I have used with success:

Tell a Story. The instructor thinks up a series of names, words, objects, places, and phrases that have no obvious connection. These are written on a set of cards, one word or phrase per card. There should be one such set for each buzz group, each containing exactly the same cues and, preferably, each set a different color. As an example, a series might contain the following:

Uncle William
a crocodile-skin handbag
shortly after midnight
"What are you doing in there?"
three Siamese kittens
two eggs and bacon

The class is divided into groups. Each group is given a set of cards, which are first shuffled by the instructor. Thus, each group will have the same cues, but in a different order. The task of the group is to invent a story—the only restriction being that the cue words must be used exactly as they appear on the cards and in the exact order in which they were dealt out to that group. The completed stories will be read aloud to the whole class. Each group will thus produce a different story, and each will be interested to see how the other groups integrated the common cues into the tale.

A simpler method is to ask each group to write down, in any order, the numbers 1 to 6. They then exchange papers with another group, and the six phrases are written on the board and numbered 1 to 6. Each group must use the phrases in the order stipulated on the paper before them.

What's the Word? The class is divided into groups. Each group is given a card or slip of paper containing the name of an object and an unrelated word; for example, *sports car—frog; evening gown—bacon*. Each card contains a different pair. The task of each group is to work out a presentation of their object that will include, in as natural a manner as possible, the word indicated; for example, to present a new sports car, mentioning the word *frog* during the presentation.

During each presentation the other groups must try to guess which word in the presentation is the special one that the performing group has been required to include. After a short discussion the groups will offer their solutions. The "winner" is the group (or groups) with the correct solution. If none are correct, those making the presentation have "won." Each group should make a presentation in turn.

Groups can be required to construct a joint letter on a suitable topic to send to a newspaper, to their local council, or to the headmaster. In Business English classes I have taught the letter chain of inquiry–order–dispatch–complaint, etc., through paired groups. Each group sold to and bought from its partner group, thus combining oral training with writing skills. Groups can compose a leaflet on their school or instructions for the care of a chosen pet or for the growing of rice. As always, tasks must be adapted to the age, the level of ability, and the cultural background of the students in question. And, needless to say, the target language must be employed throughout; the *discussion*, not the final written result, is the central point.

Role play

The buzz group is ideal for introducing the concept of role play. In ordinary conversations and discussions, pupils may be reluctant to give their own opinions for fear of attack or censure, whereas in role play they can adopt the attitudes they suppose proper to the part they have been given, and are not open to personal criticism. Role play also allows situations to be introduced which escape the confines of the classroom, situations which can require a wide range of language behavior, from aggression to conciliation, from persuasion to rejection. If role play is first introduced in group form, it will offer very little difficulty. Later, when the concept is thoroughly accepted, it should be possible to allocate individual roles. The advantage of group roles is, however, that the activity involves more pupils and keeps them talking throughout the preparation phase, as they pool ideas on how the role should be played.

The following exercise has been used with considerable success in a Swedish context and could, no doubt, be amended for other cultures.

The Island. On the board or on stencils a map is drawn of an island, with a smaller island off one of its coasts. In the center of the larger island is an estate around a large old house. The participants are summer-cottage owners on the larger island, who together own the whole island with the exception of the house and estate mentioned above. This was kept by the old woman who previously owned the whole island. She has now died and in her will bequeathed house, estate, and $10,000 to all the inhabitants jointly, *provided that* they can reach a unanimous decision on how the legacy is to be used. Otherwise the money will pass to the local Home for Decayed Donkeys. This is explained by the instructor in the persona of the lawyer/executor. The class is divided into groups, which represent different ideas on how the legacy is to be used; for example:

Group 1: They need a cement jetty for their boats, and have two builders' estimates in the area of $10,000. It so happens that their cottages are near the jetty site.

Group 2: Preservationists with children, they want to rebuild the rather dilapidated old house as a community center for the whole island. Materials and the installation of piped water, electricity, etc., would cost at least $10,000.

Group 3: They have younger children than the previous group, and wish to make the main bay on the island safer for bathing. They want huts, sanitary arrangements, and a sauna.

Group 4: They are bird-watchers. The smaller island, which is uninhabited, is overgrown and impenetrable. However, it is a resting place for migratory birds, and the group wishes to build a footbridge and an observation tower, clear part of the island, purchase photographic equipment, etc.

Each group will prepare its case, choosing the best arguments. They should also think of possible compromises to reach agreement, though these will not be offered until each group has made its own case. The "lawyer" should ask each group for its suggestions, but should not intervene in the ensuing discussion except to remind participants that a unanimous decision must be reached and that his helicopter leaves in *n* minutes (thus setting a time limit). This exercise will fill a forty-five-minute period.

It is fun to invent role plays of this kind, and we have thought up a number in our department and used them with considerable success. Because the essential work is done in groups, there are few problems with shy pupils unable to enter into a role. There may be a problem of class size, however, and group role play, especially, tends to work better with about sixteen pupils. The class can often be divided, with one half doing another task with teacher supervision, or possibly engaging in one of the simpler types of group activity described above, which they complete before watching the role play prepared by the other half.

Oral presentation

One should also try to see to it that the final presentation of a group discussion is shared around among the group, at least over a number of occasions. Gradually, where it is felt to be appropriate, stress can be laid on presentation techniques. The ability to present a report, a point of view, or an argument clearly and persuasively is a valuable communicative skill which can well be trained in the language classroom. Apart from the more obvious points of speaking clearly and without monotony, facing the audience, and looking alert (which turn out to be not at all so obvious in practice!), it is very useful for students to learn to use such aids as the overhead projector, the flip pad, and even the blackboard.

Groups can be given, for instance, a factual article from a newspaper or journal or the sales brochure of a car firm, statistics on pollution, or world population and birthrate figures. They must work out, in their groups, how best to present the facts or put a case, what sort of diagrams to use (for example, graphs, multiple-bar charts, pie charts, maps, tables), the best prompt words for an overhead transparency, etc. They should divide up the presentation among two or three members of the group, and it must be made without manuscripts. Cue words may be used, but the temptation to read (or mumble) a prepared script must be overcome.

The ultimate sort of presentation is probably the formal debate, with all its conventions so dear to Anglo-Saxon countries. This may occasionally have a place in foreign-language training, perhaps as an end-of-term speciality, and even here arguments for and against the selected motion can be prepared in buzz groups. The full-scale debate is so special an activity it might warrant an article to itself. It is hardly, however, a major tool of foreign-language instruction.

Small groups and the teacher

We have been using buzz groups in our department with considerable success for some time. They can be equally successful in a schoolroom context, because they present a situation that closely approximates real life and they activate pupils in a way few other techniques can do.

The teacher must give clear instructions for each task. He may also provide a vocabulary list of words and phrases that may be necessary or useful (and if they are found to be so, they will be learned painlessly). After completion of the task he should be generous with praise, and he may take up a *few* select points for comment. While these may be structural, the most important responses to correct in such an exercise will often be those that are *inappropriate* for communicative reasons—for instance, because they lead to serious misunderstanding, or are of the wrong level of formality, or are unintentionally impolite, or are likely to irritate partners in the communicative act, be they native speakers or others. It is in many ways more demanding to judge and train appropriateness than correctness.

During the exercise, however, the initiative passes to the students; the teacher finds himself suddenly with little to do but supply the odd word here and there, prevent reversion to the native language, and perhaps, if the walls are thin, remind some groups to reduce their noise level. By and large, however, the more noise, the more successful the exercise and the more fluent the speech being produced. Students learn from each other, and correction by their peers in the natural give-and-take of discussion can often be more successful than correction from the teacher, to which they are so accustomed. Not merely their language skills will benefit; group work also fosters the individual's insight into his comparative strengths and weaknesses, and it is a valuable preparation for working life. Periodically, groups should be reshuffled to preserve originality and a creative tension.[4]

To return to the central concern of this article, fluency training: whether one uses the small group or some other technique, there is a lot to be said for encouraging the teacher to shut up and the pupils to talk—preferably several at once. □

---

[4] The psychology of small-group learning is an interesting and useful study. See, e.g., M.L.J. Abercrombie, "Small Groups," in Brian M. Foss, ed., *New Horizons in Psychology* (New York: Penguin 1966); and J. McLeish, W. Matheson, and J. Park, *The Psychology of the Learning Group* (London: Hutchinson, 1973).

FORUM NEWS & IDEAS

BURMA

Developing Reading Comprehension: More Useful Exercises

THI-HA
Institute of Education, Rangoon

Recently a boy in his first year of college (seventh year of learning English as a foreign language, and whom I had occasionally "tutored" during the previous year) came to my office and poured his heart out (in Burmese):

"Saya,[1] just look at this (English) test paper! Look at all the 'new' words in the reading passage! And look at the sentences, all very long and complicated! And...and, this word (*hyacinth*), I don't even know how to pronounce it, let alone what it means. I just can't make head or tail of it...."

A difficult reading passage

I looked at the reading passage. There were three paragraphs. I skimmed through them and, quite honestly, I felt that both the lexical and syntactic loads of the passage were rather heavy, especially for a learner who had had just about 700 hours of English—not a high-powered intensive course, but the "forty-five-minutes-per-day, five-days-per-week, thirty-weeks-per-year, six-years" variety, with no laboratory work, no supplementary readers, and no exposure to the language outside of the English class.

Moreover, as one who often hunts for reading and writing material in magazines and other periodicals (for use in my regular classes), I immediately remembered having seen those paragraphs—those very words and sentences—somewhere in my collection.

I told the boy to leave the paper with me and come back in a week.

Once home, I went through the "Contents" of the hundred or so copies of the *Reader's Digest* that I had collected over the past few years and, as luck would have it, located the original article: "World's Most Exotic Nuisance," by James Poling, *Reader's Digest*, November 1964, pp. 104–7.

I checked the test passage against the article and, sure enough, the former was made up of three "chunks" lifted *in toto* from various sections of the latter.

Satisfied that the reading passage was not an adaptation or a simplification but an original piece of writing, I began to scrutinize the material. Indeed, the vocabulary was as difficult as the syntactic structures were complicated for a learner at the level described. Nevertheless, the material did contain enough clues to enable the learner to guess intelligently what the new words meant and what, in general, the passage was about. The problem, therefore, was not so much the difficulty level of the passage as lack of training in *word attack* and *sentence attack*. And who is responsible for this, the textbook or the teacher?

The usual comprehension exercises

If we look at the "comprehension" books—of whatever sort—we find that the exercises that accompany the reading passage are invariably of the following types:

a. True-False or Yes-No questions
b. Matching, Multiple-choice, or Supply items
c. *Wh*-questions requiring full-sentence answers.

Indeed, these have their value. But, to me, they are useful for *testing* rather than *developing* comprehension. Between the reading passage and those exercises is a gap that must be bridged—by the teacher if not the book—if we are truly to develop the reading skill of our learners.

U Thi-Ha is an assistant lecturer in the English Department, Institute of Education, and a senior member of the English Language Centre, Rangoon. His duties at the Institute include giving lectures on TEFL, language testing, sociolinguistics, and semantics to M.A. students in English; at the English Language Centre he revises and rewrites English textbooks for Burmese schools, designs and evaluates testing procedures, and writes and publishes supplementary exercises, lesson plans, teaching guides, suggestions for classroom techniques, and radio lessons. U Thi-Ha holds an M.A. in applied linguistics from the University of Lancaster, and in 1977 participated in a seven-month ESOL Educators Program at the East-West Center in Hawaii.

A better kind of exercise

What I have in mind is the kind of exercises that will train the learner to (1) *consciously* look for clues that can help them "guess" the meaning of a new word, (2) *consciously* break up a long sentence into its parts in order to interpret the meaning of the whole, and (3) *consciously* infer—when clues are meager—the meaning of either a new lexical item or a long and complicated structure by relating whatever he can grasp from the printed page to his own knowledge and experience gained through the study of subjects other than English.

To illustrate, I reproduce below the first paragraph of the test passage I mentioned above, and follow it with the exercises I have devised for training students in *word attack* and *sentence attack*:

> 1 The water hyacinth, more aptly known
> as the "purple curse," multiplies with un-
> 3 believable rapidity. In a single growing
> season, ten small hyacinths can increase to
> more than 600,000 closely intertwined
> 6 plants—forming a mat so dense that it
> weighs 180 tons, and so buoyant that it can
> support a man's weight. Such a mat can
> 9 grow and spread until it covers a body of
> water, sealing it so tight that fish and other
> aquatic life suffocate from lack of oxygen,
> 12 clogging it so compactly that boats cannot
> fight their way through. Today, millions of
> acres of lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, ca-
> 15 nals, and swamps throughout the world are
> encrusted with the evil weed.

EXERCISES

(*Note*: To learners of the level described, the following are "new" words: *aptly, multiplies, rapidity, dense, buoyant, body of water, aquatic life, suffocate, lack, clogging, compactly,* and *encrusted*.)

A. Find the clues.

1. One phrase in lines 3 and 4, one word in line 6, and one word in line 16 tell us that hyacinths are *plants*. What are those phrases and words?

2. One word in line 1, one phrase in lines 9 and 10, one word in line 11, one word in line 12, and six words in lines 14 and 15 tell us that these plants *grow in water*. What are those words and that phrase?

3. One sentence helps us to guess the correct sense of the word *multiplies* (line 2) as used in this paragraph. The same sentence also illustrates what is meant by *rapidity* (line 3). Which sentence is that?

4. Five words in this paragraph are clear examples of *a body of water* (lines 9 and 10). What are those five words?

B. Find what each of the following stands for in the text.

1. *it* in *it weighs 180 tons* (line 7)

2. *it* in *it can support a man's weight* (lines 7 and 8)

---

[1] *Saya:* A Burmese title meaning "Teacher," "Master."

3. *it* in *it covers a body of water* (lines 9 and 10)

4. *it* in *sealing it so tight* (line 10)

5. *the evil weed* (line 16)

C. Find the relation between words and phrases within a sentence.

1. In *forming a mat* . . . (line 6) (1) What is it that forms a mat? (2) What kind of a mat is it? (3) What weighs 180 tons? (4) So, what do you think *dense* means: (*a*) thin and light, or (*b*) thick and heavy?

2. In *it can support* . . . (lines 7 and 8) (1) What is *it*? (2) What mat is it?/A mat of what? (3) Where do these hyacinths grow? (4) Are they *under* the water or on top of the water? (clue in lines 9 and 10 *covers a body of water*) (5) What can it support? (6) Why can it support? (7) So, what do you think *buoyant* means: (*a*) heavy enough to sink, or (*b*) light enough to float on water?

3. In *sealing* . . . (line 10) *seal* means "to close, to put a lid/cover on something." (1) What seals what? (2) What are the things that live in water? (3) Only fish? (4) What phrase has the writer used (in line 11) to mean things other than fish that live in water? (5) So, what do you think *aquatic life* means: (*a*) living things on land, or (*b*) living things in water?

4. In *suffocate from lack of oxygen* (line 11) (1) What suffocate? (2) Why do they suffocate?/What do they suffocate from? (3) What will happen if living things do not get oxygen? (4) So, what do you think *suffocate* means: (*a*) live because there is oxygen, or (*b*) die because there is no oxygen? (5) And so, what can *lack* mean: (*a*) having oxygen, or (*b*) not having oxygen?

5. In *clogging it* . . . (line 12) (1) What is *it*? (2) What clogs the body of water? (3) How does it clog the body of water? (4) What does *boats cannot fight their way through* mean? (5) So, what do you think *clogging* means: (*a*) opening the way, or (*b*) blocking the way? (6) If boats cannot go through, how do you think this mat (of hyacinths) blocks the way: (*a*) loosely, or (*b*) tightly? (7) Then, what should *compactly* mean?

D. Find the relation between sentences (and answer these questions).

1. What are water hyacinths?

2. Why do fish and other aquatic life suffocate from lack of oxygen?

3. Why can't boats fight their way through?

4. This paragraph describes two "bad" things that water hyacinths do. What are they?

5. The word *purple* (line 2) tells us that a certain part of this plant has a purple color. Which part do you think it could be: (*a*) stem? (*b*) leaves? (*c*) flowers?

6. When a certain thing is not only useless but also harmful/troublesome to us, we call it a "curse." Why is the hyacinth called/known as the "purple curse"?

7. Why does the writer say that the water hyacinth *multiplies* with *unbelievable rapidity?*

8. What happens when these water hyacinths multiply?

9. One of the meanings of *evil* is "bad, harmful." Why does the writer call the water hyacinth *the evil weed?*

10. What is the main idea of this paragraph?

Conclusions

I tried these exercises out with the boy who came and a number of his "fellow sufferers" who had taken the test—about twenty students in all. Not only did the exercises work but the "guinea pigs" enjoyed doing them!

(I should point out that in a situation where the development of the speaking skill is given little or no emphasis in the foreign-language course—as in this country—these exercises may be conducted in the mother tongue, the objective being *comprehension* and not *expression*.)

Only when they had been taken through these word-attack and sentence-attack exercises did I ask the students to tackle the questions in Section D, any or all of which may be given in the Yes-No, True-False, Matching, Multiple-choice, or Supply form.

Admittedly, such exercises are not always easy to devise. A teacher may spend hours and not come up with anything satisfactory. Neither will every passage conveniently lend itself to making up exercises of this nature. However, these difficulties should not deter us (teachers) from making an effort, especially where dividends far exceed the investment.

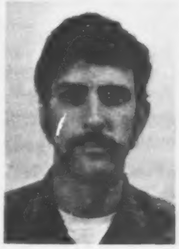
To conclude, I have but one remark to make: Particularly at the advanced or tertiary level of language instruction, it's time we trained our learners with original pieces of writing. Using all those doctored passages, simplified stories, and adapted selections—with which many, if not all, "comprehension" books are profuse—only makes weaklings of our learners. After all, once they leave college, they will encounter original writing, and no original writer of fact or fiction will write to suit a particular level or reader.

COLOMBIA

A Four-Day Immersion Experience

Frank P. Rutter
Universidad del Valle

In June 1978 a group of twenty-five advanced students of English and five teachers from the Universidad del Valle, organized by former Peace Corps Volunteer Victor Cruz, went on a four-day retreat in the mountains near Cali. The purpose of the trip was to test the students' response to four days of total immersion in the English language. Most of the students had finished their courses at the university and now wanted to experience how their knowledge of English would stand up in an ambience where Spanish would be "unknown."



Frank P. Rutter says of his varied career: "Since leaving my native England several years ago I have had many occupations, including that of a G.I., a California State Park Ranger, an actor, a truck driver, an instructor of Spanish at the University of Virginia, where I graduated with a Ph.D. in 1975, and finally an Assistant Professor of Spanish at Univalle. I have found that these experiences have helped me to adapt to any situation, which was why I wanted to participate in the 'total immersion' here described."

Procedures

Several situations were thought up where the students would use English in simulated everyday situations. For example, ordering a dinner or explaining to an English-speaking visitor where a specific location was in Cali. Spanish was used in situations where a "friend" would translate for his companion who did not know any English—for instance, getting the companion a hotel room for the night or ordering a special meal.

One surprising thing happened to the students who had been reticent or shy in classes at the university: they proved to be quite communicative in the aforementioned invented situations. This may have been because of the relaxed atmosphere or because of the fact that the professors who were there would not be testing them for performance with regard to academic qualifications. In fact, the student-professor relation was played down considerably, and, as most of the students would not take courses with any of the professors again, barriers of fear and shyness were lowered if not eliminated.

The third night had been left open for "Spanish-Speaking Night"—meaning that the students could feel free to use Spanish to communicate if they wished. Most preferred to continue with English, and it was only on the last morning that the tired, immersed group reverted to Spanish. The professors took the opportunity then to hold a meeting to find out what the members of the group liked or disliked about the experience.

Conclusions

The general opinion inclined most favorably towards more experimentation with this kind of learning experience, which should not be restricted to advanced students, but should be made available to intermediate and even beginning students. The most popular activity turned out to be walks in the country with the professors, which made the students feel particularly relaxed and communicative. One deficiency in the program was the lack of a native speaker in the women's dormitory. In the case of the male students, the presence of a native speaker helped to keep the immersion "total," whereas in the female residence there was a tendency to use Spanish when no professor was within hearing distance.

The group went back to Cali believing that they could indeed survive in an English-speaking country, and most stated that they had learned useful expressions that they had not used in class. The next plan is to take a group of beginners to an American missionary colony in southern Colombia (we haven't asked them yet), where a small town of supermarkets, cinema, and post office with native English speakers would be ideal for a close approximation to the real thing. I will keep the FORUM posted should this ambition materialize in the near future.

GREECE

Group Work: The Road towards Reality

E.J. KRIGAS

Group work is a useful technique in foreign-language teaching because it causes the students to act in cooperation with one another towards the solution of a situation given by the teacher. This cooperation is a positive step towards the functional learning of the target language. Participating actively in the given lesson/situation (that is, responding together to a given stimulus) and, at the same time, working as members of a small unit develops a positive psychological condition: it makes the group members feel more confident of their abilities. Experience has shown this to be more beneficial than the condition resulting from the teacher-student or student-student *frontal* and *pair* work, respectively (which may have sinister results for those students who have difficulty in some aspect of foreign language learning). In group work the students can go through every difficulty they meet by working together in a congenial environment in which they can express, compare, or devise the solutions that will bring their task to an acceptable conclusion. Also, the teacher can supervise and help students working in a group more easily than in any other classroom situation (face-to-face work, pair work, etc.).

Group work minimizes individual competition—so persistently fostered by many teachers—and this is a great benefit to the students. Experience has shown that they respond very differently when they work in groups, mainly because they know that, since the responsibility is shared among three or four persons, they will not be individually reprimanded if something goes wrong, nor will they suffer depression and perhaps envy upon hearing another student's correct response.

Eleftherios J. Krigas has taught English for six years in various English language institutes in Athens. The accompanying article came out of his research on methods of teaching English as a foreign language undertaken as a part of his studies in teacher-training courses at the British Council, Athens, in 1977. Mr. Krigas had earlier received a B.A. degree in English language and literature at the University of Athens. He is currently working toward a Ph.D. in prehistoric archaeology.

The following is a summary of some group-work activity I have been doing with advanced students, sixteen to eighteen years of age. It is based on written texts from newspapers and magazines, giving the students another aspect of English not provided in their textbooks and at the same time enriching their knowledge of cultural events and the world of the communication media, which they otherwise do not have a chance to become acquainted with while they are immersed in their high school lessons.

I usually arrange the students in three groups of four students each and give each group a magazine or newspaper and some questions (at least four) on an article (or advertisement) that I have chosen. The article is always a relatively short one and many times, I admit, controversial. The students work through the questions, which serve as a guide to understanding the article. They write the answers and prepare to speak about their subject or express their opinion about it—which is often different from that of the author. At the end of the thirty minutes that I allot for this preparation, each group speaks about its own subject, bringing the matter to the attention of the rest of the class, who then begin thinking about it and expressing their own views. This discussion goes on for at least thirty more minutes. During the whole process of this preplanned work I can be near the students and solve any problem that may arise or guide them if they run into any difficulty (words they have not met before, syntactic peculiarities, idioms, miscellaneous grammatical constructions, etc.).

The students enjoy this activity because it is a way through which they can reach, at a certain standard of the spoken language, the *real language* (hence the title). They eagerly await the day of the week (I do this only once a week) on which they have their appointment with the fantastic world of the magazine!

REFERENCES

Byrne, Donn. 1969. *English teaching extracts* (No. 39). Longman.

______. 1976. *Teaching oral English*. Longman.

Jolly, David and Patrick Early. Group work in English language teaching. (University of Athens handout notes U29, 1976.)

Lee, W.R. 1969. *ELT selections II* (ch.21). Oxford University Press.

IRAN

Self-Correction of Compositions: The Three-Pencil Method

JOHN SIVELL

Jundi Shapur University, Ahvaz

A common problem for second-language learners is the difficulty of correcting one's own composition errors. Every teacher has had the discouraging experience of seeing his or her students hand in exercise after exercise with the same errors repeated over and over again. Why should it be that even conscientious students find it difficult to overcome this problem? When shown their errors, in the corrected exercise, our students can normally identify and understand the slips that they have made. Moreover, if for no other reason than to earn better grades, they usually seem anxious enough to eliminate their errors. But as we might expect, it appears that in the heat of writing a student may lack the self-awareness necessary for effective self-correction. For the student, acquiring this skill is essential: it is the key to greater confidence, more enjoyable writing, and higher scores. And for the teacher it is also important; if we accept that repetition plays a large role in language learning, we may indeed fear that the constant repetition of errors will result in our students actually "learning" the very errors that they should overcome.

How the technique works

For the past two years, I have been using what I call the "three-pencil method" in paragraph-writing classes for the Introduction to Literature course and in sentence-level work for more elementary composition courses. This is a technique intended to increase students' analytical awareness of their own potential errors while they are actually correcting their work. The idea is simple: for this kind of exercise, I give an in-class assignment and insist that my students do their writing in plain blue ballpoint; then, when the allotted time is up, I ask them to make any corrections that they find necessary, using only an ordinary black pencil; finally, after a moment I request them to take out a red pencil and recorrect their papers, this time paying special attention to a list of particularly troublesome errors of which I remind them orally at the time. Almost always, the students locate and correct their own errors far more efficiently when they are encouraged to think about specific problems of grammar or idiom. And the improvement is easy to see because of the different colors of the pencils. When at last I collect and grade the papers, I am able to take account not only of the students' finished performance but also of their astuteness in self-correction.

Some cautionary remarks

This teaching method does present a few practical difficulties, none of which, however, seems insurmountable. Most obviously, there is the complication of needing to be sure that each student will bring and use the requisite three pencils. Fortunately, the method usually gives quite rapid and also quite easily seen results, so that selling the technique to students is not too difficult. (Anyway, even when good cooperation seems assured, the wise teacher can take the added precaution of bringing along a small stock of extra pencils!)

Another point is that, for most efficient work, the class must be trained to write in double- or even triple-spaced lines. If this is not done, the result is likely to be a rainbow-colored illegible mess. But then, double-spacing is a good habit for language learners in any case. Still, I have found that it is necessary to remind students of this practical requirement every time; without such a reminder, there is always someone who forgets.

Finally, of course, the method takes a few extra minutes for each of the two self-correction periods. But as I would not suggest using this approach more than about once a week, and as I feel the results are worth the time, I think teachers interested in trying out the "three-pencil method" are unlikely to be seriously inconvenienced in their planning.

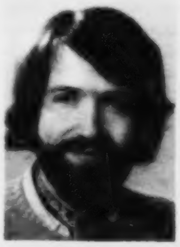
A more complicated problem for the teacher is making the most of the technique so that it is not just one more mechanical exercise. It is obvious that very little will be gained if students simply learn to correct their own work when the teacher provides them with oral guidance. Real progress will be made only when students advance to a degree of genuine independence in their self-correction. To this end, I have found it profitable to attempt two different strategies for influencing my students.

Using the error list

On the one hand, a lot depends on the thoroughness with which the error list is used. By keeping records over a period of time, it is not difficult to produce a satisfactory list, and analyzing it into a manageable minimum of problem areas should be easy enough. Needless to say, each teacher's list will vary according to the level and the native-language background of the classes taught. But the trick is to make this list carry through from the occasional "three-pencil" sessions to *every* exercise that the students write.

In my experience, improvement can only be assured when students realize that slips in areas covered by the list are especially important and will always evoke high-profile comment by the teacher, whatever the exercise. This is not to say that the process should become oppressive. Reaction to errors need not take the form of draconian reductions in grades; jocular remarks in the margin of an exercise or friendly encouragement given in conversation before or after class may be completely satisfactory reminders of the need for self-awareness.

John Sivell is an assistant professor of English at Jundi Shapur University, Ahvaz, Iran. A Canadian, Dr. Sivell was educated at the universities of Toronto, Cambridge, and East Anglia. His particular teaching interest, he says, is the "crossroads" area, where students of English as a foreign language move from basic language work to elementary literature courses.



The object is to make students recognize that the error list is not important merely as a list of grammar points to be mastered, for in any case it will be constantly outgrown and revised. Rather, they should be encouraged to view the list as a clearly defined area in which they are being at once helped and challenged to achieve effective self-awareness and self-correction. Periodic "three-pencil" exercises, to bring home to students as vividly as possible the productive results of analytical self-correction, and continual reminders of their success or failure in this area in all their work will help to provide ideal circumstances in which students can cultivate a habit of self-aware writing. This habit is the goal, for when students have acquired it they may be expected to begin looking critically at their own strengths and weaknesses in order to make and use their *own* mental lists of problem areas.

A liberating experience

On the other hand, steps should be taken to assure that the approach encourages students to become truly self-aware, and not just self-conscious. For the best results, the teacher must from the outset explain to the class that the object is to liberate students, not to fence them in. Many, perhaps most, second-language learners—especially in the beginning—are discouraged by the mistaken idea that accurate writers always produce perfect sentences or paragraphs straight off, with all errors simply *avoided* rather than corrected. It is easy to imagine how inhibiting this illusion of perfectionism must be. Second-language students will almost certainly have developed a self-correction technique that works effectively for them in their own first language, yet it often comes as a great relief to them to learn that native speakers of English do the same. For second-language learners and native speakers alike, confident self-correction is the key to happy, uninhibited writing, because—without being unnecessarily careless, of course—enthusiastic writers must be able to forge ahead powerfully, in the confidence that they have the know-how to tidy up any minor errors when they re-read.

The sense of freedom that results from possessing an efficient self-correction technique is, I believe, equally important for the beginner struggling with a single difficult sentence and for the more advanced student attempting to write a paragraph of tricky exposition or description. But students are not certain to grasp this idea unless it is presented regularly and cogently. The visible results of "three-pencil" exercises will do a lot to make students understand the importance of analytical, efficient self-correction; still, they should not be left with the impression that this is a skill necessary only for beginners. In this regard, I have found my students fascinated to learn that even Georges Simenon, the novelist—an experienced professional writer renowned for his ability to compose at an almost incredible rate of speed—is often quoted as saying that once his stories have been written he knows he always has to go back in order to make the odd minor correction: every page should have its "cosmetic treatment," he says. All writers, even the most advanced, will benefit from the knowledge that they have developed a trustworthy method of self-correction.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to stress that the "three-pencil method" seems to be an effective strategy for helping students to correct their own writing and thus to avoid repeated errors. The technique does not appear to present any serious practical difficulties in the classroom, although teachers should realize that it will have its full value only if it is built into the wider context of a concerted effort to increase students' self-awareness generally.

MEXICO

First Encounters in a Language Classroom

Jody Williams
English Program, Hylsa, S.A.

As part of my program for a master of arts degree in teaching Spanish and ESL, at the School for International Training, in Brattleboro, Vermont, I served as a student-teacher for six weeks in Mexico. The school to which I was assigned was a private secretarial academy in which the girls could elect to study English to become bilingual secretaries. One of my classes consisted of thirty girls at the beginning level.

Total immersion

This experience strengthened my belief that the target language should be spoken almost exclusively in the language classroom. Two or three times, when I said a word in Spanish the class revolted and yelled "English, English!" The students wanted the class to be conducted totally in English; they preferred the sometimes tortuous explanations in English to a simple one-word translation into their own language. They wanted total language immersion.

My approach was an aural/oral–written one. My students relied heavily on the written word in English. Although the class was to be primarily oral, I could not deny their need to see the words written. I quickly discovered that if I insisted on entirely oral/aural work, the students became frustrated and listless and stopped trying as hard. When they had what I felt was a sufficient oral command of the material presented each day in class, I would write on the board the words that they wanted written. The students would have to attempt to spell whatever they wanted to see written, and with class effort they usually could spell the words.

Beginning conversation

I began the first class with some basic conversational material:

> Good morning.
>
> I am fine. How are you today?
>
> My name is Jody Williams. What is your name?
>
> I am twenty-five years old. How old are you?
>
> I am from Vermont. Where are you from?
>
> I have two brothers and two sisters. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

First, I went through this material by myself and explained anything that the students did not understand. For example, to explain *I am from Vermont* I drew a map of the United States on the blackboard and drew in the state of Vermont; to explain *I have two brothers and two sisters* I drew a family and indicated that one of the girls was me and the two boys were my brothers and the two girls were my sisters. To help them understand that the first sentences were declarative and gave information about myself, I would point to myself, then to the explanatory drawing, and then as I finished the sentence I would put a period on the blackboard. For the questions, I would point to the students, then to the drawing, and as I finished the question, I would put a question mark on the board. After doing this, I began the actual question-and-answer exchange between myself and individual students. I continued working with this material until all the questions and answers were student-student directed.

Jody Williams has received most of her experience in teaching English as a foreign language in

Mexico. After receiving an M.A. in the teaching of ESL and Spanish from the School for International Training, in Brattleboro, Vermont (which included a six-week teaching stint in Mexico), she moved to Monterrey, Mexico, where, during the first year of a two-year stay, she taught English to second graders at the Instituto Bilingüe, and linguistics and didactics in the teacher-training program at the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. During the second year she taught ESL to business executives at Hylsa, S.A., an industrial firm. Ms. Williams is now residing in the United States, where she is engaged in the preparation of supplementary texts in English as a second language.

I then brought to class a picture of a young girl tennis player and gave a description of her: *This is Jane Smith. She is American. She is a tennis player.*, etc. Once the students understood the description, we expanded the possibilities. From *She is American* we named various other nationalities. From *She is a tennis player* we listed other sports, and so on. Then I asked various students to come to the front of the class, and we described them. From there we expanded to questions: *Is she Mary?, Are you German?*, etc., eliciting both *yes* and *no* answers. Then I turned all the activity over to the class and they described each other and questioned each other.

Using a dialogue

The next day I introduced the following dialogue:

Irma: Hello, Juana. How are you?

Juana: I'm very happy. Tomorrow I'm going to Acapulco. How are you?

Irma: I'm very sad because I can't go to Acapulco.

Juana: Why can't you go to Acapulco?

Irma: Because I have to take some tests for college.

Juana: Well, I'll see you next week. Good luck.

Irma: 'Bye, Juana. Have fun.

I handled this dialogue in the usual manner. I went through it, explained it, and proceeded from choral repetition to individual repetition to acting out the dialogue. In addition to all of the usual reasons for using a dialogue in class, I used this particular one to introduce emotions and feelings, and cause and effect; for example, *Why are you sad? Because I can't go to Acapulco*.

I then expanded this introduction of emotions and feelings with a game of practicing them. I drew pictures of ten faces, each representing one of ten different feelings or emotions. I then had the class figure out what feelings or emotions was represented by each face. Each character had a name, so the students could say sentences such as *Ted is tired, Harriet is happy*, etc. The students asked each other questions about the characters, eliciting both *yes* and *no* responses. Referring to the dialogue, they also asked questions such as *Why is Sally sad?*, which the other students had to answer, supplying reasons (which I wrote down).

I returned to class the next day with pictures and lined them up on the blackboard. I had written down twenty of the responses the students had given the previous day as to why a character would be happy, sad, etc. I wrote each word of a sentence on a separate piece of paper and mixed the pieces up. A student would come up, take the pieces of paper that comprised a sentence, put the pieces (words) in the right order, and read the sentence aloud. The class would then supply a correct question or questions to fit the response sentence. This exercise had several purposes: strengthening the students' knowledge of word order, increasing vocabulary, stressing the difference between questions and answers, and showing cause-effect relationships.

A useful experience

I continued the class along these lines until the end of my teaching period in Mexico. I introduced every lesson with some type of visual representation, and by further drawings and explanations explained all of the material of the lessons in English. Then the class would be turned over to student conversation, during which I intervened only when absolutely necessary. As the final step I wrote on the blackboard anything from the exercise that the students wanted, once they had a good oral grip on the material. My students were very enthusiastic, and although at the beginning of the course they felt threatened by total immersion, they quickly adjusted and seemed to enjoy being exposed to English in this manner. Before this experience, I had had my doubts about being able to teach beginners totally in the target language, but this proved to me that it is not only entirely possible, but, in my opinion, the best way to make students comfortable speaking the target language. If they know that they have to speak the target language all the time and that they cannot rely on their own language, it becomes real for them—it is a real means of communication and not some strange sounds that they encounter off and on, between communicating in their own language, in the language classroom.

ROMANIA

The Man that Works Wonders: The Stickman

Gabriella Gheorghiu
*English Language Institute,
The Romanian University*

The idea of using a stickman[1] for teaching pur- oses came to me in a disco where another eacher and I were discussing new methods of eaching English as a second language. We lso discussed the use of charts, and I remem- er mentioning that I dislike ready-made harts because children much prefer to make hings themselves. I believe in giving children n opportunity to build their own lesson, to ave the feeling that they have created it. Then e lesson is so interesting, appealing, and ex- iting that you are scarcely aware of the pass- ng of time.

he challenge

I didn't know then how or when I was going o use the stickman. But soon the term started d I had to engage in an experiment (six ours a week) at a high school located in a new istrict of our capital. The buildings were ew, the school was new, and the pupils were different levels of knowledge. In the same ass there were pupils who had studied En- ish for one, two, and three years.

I started working with the required hand- ok for students of their age—the third year study. But the students weren't able to keep ce with me and the four or five students who ready knew the basic things. I felt lost. Then remembered my stickman and I told myself at I must use it. But how?

I kept on using the handbook, presenting the w words, writing them on the blackboard, plaining patterns, etc. But I devoted the last minutes of the class to the stickman. As mework I asked my students to write jokes English and illustrate them by drawings of ck figures. I told them a Romanian joke and strated it on the blackboard. For the next ss they were each required to prepare two es—dialogues—in the same way.

ping with the problems

In the beginning the students found this ac- ity difficult. They didn't know either the essary grammar or words. Since their vo- ulary was so poor, I told them to try to use new words that I had given them in the pre- us lesson. Then I showed them how to use dictionary. This brought to light another ficulty: which of the synonyms should they in that particular instance? The pupils looked the word up in the dictionary and wrote the entire list of synonyms in their copybooks. When they came to school they read the joke aloud and I told them which one of the synonyms to use. I wrote the student's joke on the blackboard and explained how to use the word in that context. Then I asked the student to read aloud the whole list, and I wrote it on the blackboard. Everybody wrote down that list of synonyms. I gave an example sentence for each synonym and stressed the differences in meaning and use of these words.

Gabriella Gheorghiu teaches English as a foreign language to high school students and at the English Language Institute of The Romanian University, in Bucharest. She writes one-act plays to use in teaching English through drama and has also written song lyrics and a story in verse for a children's record. Miss Gheorghiu is also interested in literature; she has translated Jack London's *The Valley of the Moon* and is currently working on *A Chance Acquaintance*, by William Dean Howells, and Edward Albee's *The American Dream*.

At the end of the class I collected all the papers and took them home. I corrected them and brought them to the next class. At the end of the class I chose a few of them to write on the blackboard; I discussed the mistakes, making the corrections and giving the reasons.

Besides the problem of vocabulary, the students also had the problem of how to express their thoughts in English, which is a language so different from Romanian. And there was the problem of finding a funny dialogue every time. I also had to teach my students that there are jokes for grownups and jokes for children, and that they should stick to those appropriate for their age. All this required extra work, but I was glad that the stickman was providing a good way to teach my pupils.

The experiment lasted for about three months. Admittedly, with this method the teacher has a lot of correcting to do, and sometimes—when you can't understand what the pupil means and the stickman doesn't help—you feel like giving up. You keep telling yourself that the gap between what your pupils should know and what they do know is so great that you'll never succeed.

The results

But the students help you. They are eager to learn, and step by step they improve. They told me that they wouldn't have learned so much in such a short time without this method. They recognized that it was a pleasure for them to look for jokes, listen to them wherever and whenever they could, or even to invent them. At the beginning they were reluctant to invent them because they couldn't find a real point, but I told them they all had the same interest: learning English. They were also reluctant to draw, but I explained that I didn't want artistic drawing—only a stickman, which anyone can draw. They grasped my message and helped me to help them. The most important thing was to encourage them to go on, and not let them see how little they knew. They are good children, and they realized what their level of knowledge was, but they trusted me when I promised to teach them what they should have learned.

The stickman is no longer an inanimate drawing but a real character with a sure place in my pupils' lives. He is the man who worked wonders.

---

[1] Editor's Note: More often called, in American En- ., *stick figure* (a drawing showing the head of a human g or animal as a circle, and all other parts as straight).

UNITED STATES

Stemgo: A Word-Stems Game

Chris Bernbrock
University of California, Los Angeles

"Stemgo" is a variation of vocabulary bingo that is specially designed to teach word stems. It is a game for previewing the meaning of the roots of words and increasing the students' passive vocabulary. The game has been used with great success in high intermediate and advanced ESL classes at UCLA.

How to play

To prepare for the game, give the students as a homework assignment a list of word stems which they are to review by finding for each of the stems a word that includes that stem. (The list of stems in *Study Skills*, by Richard Yorkey [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970] lends itself well to this sort of task.) The next day in class hand out vocabulary bingo sheets—sheets with sixteen large squares in four adjoining rows and columns. At the top of each square write a stem, leaving space beneath for the students to write in three words using that stem. For the first fifteen minutes of class, have students work in pairs to write in three words for each stem. Encourage the teams to make use of their dictionaries. Once the teams

Chris Bernbrock currently teaches at the American Language Center in the Extension of the University of California, Los Angeles, while working toward an M.A. degree in TESL at the same university. He previously taught English at Assumption Business Administration College and the American University Alumni Language Center in Bangkok, Thailand, and in the adult education program of the North Orange County Community College in California. Mr. Bernbrock's special interest is in English for business and economics.

have completed their sheets, use an overhead projector, a felt board, or the blackboard to display a stem and two words using that stem. Elicit from the students the meaning of the stem and of the two words. If one of the teams has on its sheet the two words you have given, it can check that square. When a team has four checks down, across, or diagonally, it wins. It adds to the fun to have some sort of prize—an envelope that the winners can open to find they have won the honor of announcing the next quiz, or some such thing.

Some valuable results

What is particularly attractive about this game is that it generates interest in words, provides for use of the dictionary, and encourages communication between members of each team. You can also isolate prefixes and suffixes for analysis. For example, when dealing with a stem such as *form*, you can show how prefixes like *con-* and *re-* bring different meanings to the stem in words like *conform* and *reform*. It is an enjoyable game that helps students develop a passive vocabulary that will improve their reading skills.

Stemgo is most effective when followed by a reading passage that contextualizes difficult words made on the various stems you have used, thereby giving students a chance to discover how a knowledge of stems can help them make educated guesses at the meanings of words they have never seen before. Try it the next time you are wondering how you might treat word stems.

STEMGO

anthro 1. 2. 3.	auto 1. 2 3	cosm 1. 2. 3.	dic, dict 1. 2. 3.
duc, duct 1. 2. 3.	geo 1. 2. 3.	homo 1. 2. 3.	medi 1. 2. 3.
pater, patri 1. 2. 3.	pathy 1. 2. 3.	scrib, script 1. 2 3.	voc, vok 1. 2. 3
form 1. 2. 3.	sequ, secut 1. 2. 3.	man, manu 1. 2 3.	pan 1. 2. 3.

YUGOSLAVIA

What Grammar Should We Teach?

OLGA MIŠESKA TOMIĆ

University "Kiril i Metodij," Skopje

Although the contribution of generative transformational grammar to an understanding of the nature of language acquisition processes has received substantial recognition, opposition to the introduction of transformational analysis into the classroom still persists. The reasons given for this opposition are numerous, but they can be effectively reduced to two basic ones: (1) transformational theory is in a permanent process of remodeling, and the educator is at a loss as to which variant to choose; (2) transformational analysis presupposes intuitive checkups, which are not feasible with respect to a language that is not native or near-native.

A false dilemma

Both these reasons are fallacious. The dilemma about selection would be a true dilemma only if we were to teach a model in its entirety, which we need not and should not do. Our attempts to replace traditional grammar with modern linguistics should not result in simplification and adaptation for pedagogical purposes of any given linguistic description. The experienced teacher will find in each model, be it transformational or some other kind, aspects relevant to his teaching situation. He must evaluate the applicability of the various linguistic theories to the teaching of a given L_2 in a given L_1 situation and use them accordingly. As a consequence, his pedagogical grammar will include components of all the variants of transformational grammar (and other grammars) appropriate for the teaching of a given component of the target language. As to the transformational checkups, they are intended to serve two purposes: (*a*) to examine the grammaticality of given linguistic units, and (*b*) to help draw up rules and test their applicability or validity. The teaching of the grammar of a foreign language requires checkups only for the latter purpose and can perform them against previously accumulated knowledge of the foreign language or against a list of examples that the teacher marks as correct or incorrect. I shall illustrate this for (1) the English verbal system and (2) deletions in relative clauses.

The verbal system

Instead of having our students memorize the great number of English "tenses" and their uses, we can teach them that the English verbal system represents a combination of a lexical item (verb) and exponents of the grammatical categories of person, number, tense, modality, perfective aspect, progressive aspect, and voice, each of which carries a particular meaning. If introduced gradually and illustrated by simple examples, the categories and their exponents present no difficulty for the learner.[1] The best plan is to start with person and number, since they connect the verb with the noun, the categories of which would have already been introduced. Then one can devote some attention to the morphophonemic rules in general and those involved in the phonetic representation of the two categories presented, in particular.

Olga Mišeska Tomić is assistant professor of English linguistics at the University of Skopje, Yugoslavia. Her education includes work done at the Faculty of Philology, Belgrade; the School of Applied Linguistics, Edinburgh; the University of Washington; the Laboratory of Mathematical Linguistics in Charles University, Prague; and the Department of Linguistics, University of Massachusetts, Amherst (as a Fulbright scholar). Dr. Tomić is concerned with the popularization of contemporary grammatical models and their adaptation for classroom use. She has published a number of articles on linguistics and language teaching and is the author of two books: *Generative Syntax in Theory and Practice* (1978) and *The Word* (1979).

The following learning unit reserved for the verbal system[2] can acquaint the student with the verbal category par excellence—tense—and explain the functioning of the affix-shift transformation, which attaches each affix to the verb that comes immediately after it. When introducing the next category, possibly modality, we should familiarize the students with the notion of order and illustrate it in the examples of the categories with which they know how to operate. With each subsequent category, ordering will be reconsidered. After presenting all the categories,[3] we may do one or both of two things: (*a*) list and exemplify the order according to which the exponents of individual categories enter the verb expression and/or (*b*) give a set of verb expressions some of which are grammatical and others of which are not, and ask the students to draw up the rules for the formation of the grammatical ones and account for the ungrammaticality of the others.

a. *I paints.
b. We have painted.
c. They have been painted.
d. They have been painting.
e. *They been have painted.
f. *They have would be painting.
g. They would have been painting.
h. He would have been painted.

Deletions in relative clauses

Through a comparable list of examples we can introduce deletions in relative clauses. These are dealt with at a later stage of the learning process and presuppose familiarity with relative sentences in general; as a matter of fact, they represent a corollary to the dis-

---

A version of this paper was presented at the Fourth World Congress of the Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée (AILA), held in Stuttgart in August 1975.

[1] The grading as well as the level of abstraction depends on the age and sophistication of the learner.

[2] Obviously, between the learning units devoted to the verbal system there will be units concerned with other grammatical aspects.

[3] Depending on the age of the learner, the previous knowledge of the foreign language, and the intensity of the course, the presentation may take various lengths of time.

cussion of relativization. The various types of sentences illustrating the deletions can be given at random, but the student will find it easier if we group the cognate structures together:

a. (*i*) The book which you see belongs to our teacher.
  (*ii*) The book you see belongs to our teacher.

b. (*i*) The book which is on the table belongs to our teacher.
  (*ii*) *The book is on the table belongs to our teacher.
  (*iii*) The book on the table belongs to our teacher.

c. (*i*) The woman who wrote this book lives in our neighborhood.
  (*ii*) *The woman wrote this book lives in our neighborhood.
  (*iii*) *The woman this book lives in our neighborhood.

d. (*i*) The article about which we quarreled is in front of you.
  (*ii*) *The article we quarreled is in front of you.
  (*iii*) *The article about we quarreled is in front of you.
  (*iv*) The article we quarreled about is in front of you.

e. (*i*) The book which is red belongs to our teacher.
  (*ii*) *The book is red belongs to our teacher.
  (*iii*) *The book red belongs to our teacher.
  (*iv*) The red book belongs to our teacher.

After some consideration, with or without the help of the teacher, the class will come up with the following conclusions on the constraints on deletion in relative clauses:

1. The relativized object can be deleted whenever not preceded by a preposition.

2. The relativized subject is deletable only when preceding an auxiliary and a prepositional phrase; its deletion, however, entails obligatory deletion of the respective auxiliary.

3. In the case of predicate adjectives, the deletion of the relative is possible only if followed by copula deletion and adjective preposing.

The teacher may then explain that the last constraint, as a matter of fact, constitutes the adjective transformation; he can then discuss the synonymy of the adjective + noun and the noun + relative clause containing predicate adjective with the same features.

Different levels of maturity

That a discussion of this type presupposes familiarity with the expressions that are compared goes without saying. But it also requires a certain maturity on the part of the student. Explanations and rules, whether transformationally based or not, disturb young learners. Therefore, if the foreign language is introduced before the age of fourteen or fifteen, the teacher should not in the early stages insist on deductions.

With children up to ten years old the teachers should make ample use of their ability to imitate and should concentrate on building up native-like feeling for the phonetic and syntactic system of the target language.[4] This approach would both favor the natural faculties of the learners and provide a testing ground for the rules to be introduced at a later stage.

After puberty—that is, after the age of fourteen or fifteen—the brain matures and language development abilities tend to freeze; consequently, the learner finds it difficult to imitate the pronunciation and structures of a second language.[5] What is more, the increasing development of his analytical capacities and the progressive growth of the element of thinking urge him to make conscious efforts to select the correct foreign forms for the expression of ideas and thoughts originally shaped in the native language. Consequently, any insistence on habit formation is useless. With mature students, the teacher has to make use of the power of analysis and generalization and insist on eliciting rules, transformational or other, after each set of data.[6] The level of abstraction of these rules will, of course, depend on the age of the students.

With learners ten to fifteen years old, one should combine habit formation and rule deduction. New material can be introduced and drilled on a stimulus-response basis, but before ending the learning unit the teacher must activate the reasoning capacities of the students and ask them to make generalizations. These should be followed by checkup exercises which may utilize sets of colored cardboards containing examples of various word classes and suffixes. By modeling and remodeling sentences out of those examples, the students will get a feeling for the dynamism of the language and learn the functioning of the rules in a pleasing way. Whether and to what extent these rules will be transformationally, stratificationally, tagmemically, systemically, or categorically biased or whether they will rely predominantly on traditional descriptions depends on (*a*) the element(s) taught, (*b*) the models underlying previous foreign- or native-language instruction, and, last but not least, (*c*) the linguistic and methodological background of the textbook writer and the teacher.[7] In each case, the choice has been or is made by an educator, although not by the same one. So, ultimately, the share of each linguistic model in pedagogical grammars, whether described in textbooks or not, and, consequently, the use or misuse of contemporary language studies in foreign- (or native-) language teaching depends on the affiliation and knowledge of those who teach it.

---

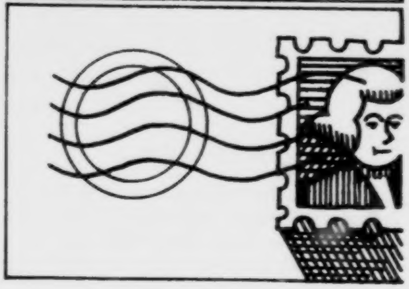
[4] Systematic observations of the classes of learners of different age groups conducted by the Department of English, University of Zagreb, point to the fact that habit formation methods succeed with young children and fail with adults.

[5] See E. H. Lenneberg, *Biological Foundations of Language* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), pp. 156, 176, 210.

[6] Mats Oskarsson, in his report at the Third Congress of AILA, in Copenhagen, said that the general conclusion "is that adults acquire foreign-language grammar better by a cognitive method than by a method built exclusively on habit-forming principles. It also seems safe to say that explanations clarifying the structure of the foreign language are worthwhile even when supplied at the expense of practice. Finally, it can be concluded that a cognitive approach results in better motivation and a more favorable attitude than habit-forming approaches."

[7] Luckily, the people working at the higher ranks of the decision-making structure of authority in the educational system know nothing about grammatical theory and grammatical models.

Letters



A Pen-Friends Club

Eriyawetiya High School
Keleniya
Sri Lanka
31 July 1979

Dear Editor:

I enjoy reading your journal to keep abreast of the current concepts in teaching English as a second language.

Now I would like the help of your journal to further a project that I have started in my school to broaden the horizon of my students through the exchange of letters with students from other parts of the world.

I hope that you will extend to me your cooperation and kindly publish at least my address so that I could contact students from around the world to introduce to my students.

Mohamed Naeem
Pen-Friends Club
(age range 10–17 years)
Eriyawetiya High School
Keleniya
Sri Lanka

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,
M. Naeem

"The Lighter Side"

FOUR PUZZLE STORIES

THE HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY

John was telling his friends about his house in the country. "It's a beautiful place," he said. "To the north there are green fields. To the west there is a high mountain. It's always covered with snow. To the east and the south there is a forest. It's really beautiful in the morning. The sun comes up from behind the mountain, the birds sing, and everything seems fresh and new." "Do you really have a house in the country?" said Peter. "A part of your story isn't true."

Can you find it?

(From I.S.P. Nation, *Language Teaching Techniques*, English Language Institute, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand)

THE DOLLAR BILLS

A man phoned his daughter to ask her to buy a few things he needed for a trip. He told her she would find enough dollar bills for the purchases in an envelope on his desk. She found the envelope with "98" written on it. In a shop she bought $90 worth of things, but when it was time to pay, she didn't have $8 left over, as she thought she would. In fact, she didn't have enough money to pay for all the purchases. By how much was she short, and why?

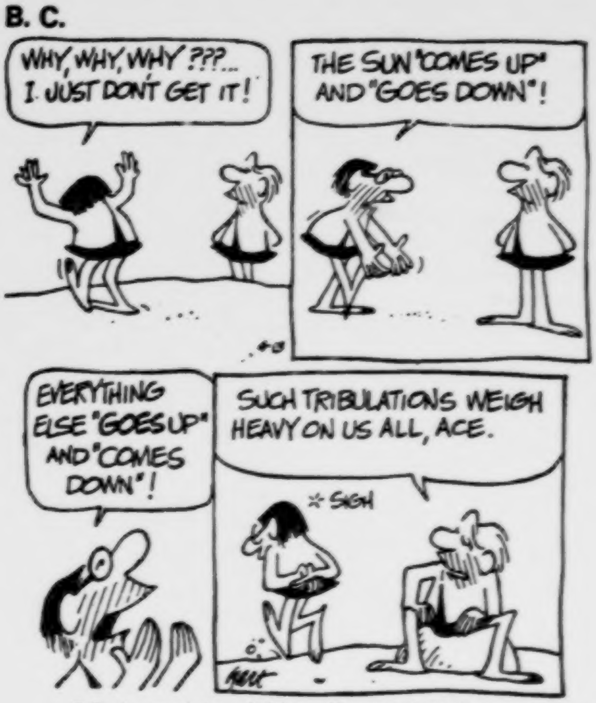
CROSSING THE BRIDGE

Tom came to a bridge marked "Total weight 100 kilos." Now, Tom weighed 95 kilos, but he had three pineapples, each weighing 2 kilos. He couldn't throw them across the river, because the pineapples would be smashed to pieces. How did Tom cross the bridge?

FINDING THE LIGHT BALL

There are nine balls which all weigh the same amount, except for one which weighs slightly less. You have a balance scale, but are allowed to weigh the balls only two different times. How would you find the one ball that weighs less than the others?

(From John Rogers, *Group Activities for Language Learning*, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore)


B. C.
WHY, WHY, WHY ???... I JUST DON'T GET IT!
THE SUN "COMES UP" AND "GOES DOWN"!
EVERYTHING ELSE "GOES UP" AND "COMES DOWN"!
SUCH TRIBULATIONS WEIGH HEAVY ON US ALL, ACE.
SIGH
hart

B.C. by permission of Johnny Hart and Field Enterprises, Inc.

A SCHOOL JOKE (?)

Watching his class take a true-false test, a high-school teacher notices a young man flipping a coin[1] before writing each answer. "What are you doing?" he asks the student.

"Taking the test," the young man replies. "Heads is true and tails is false."[2]

The period ends, and as the teacher collects the papers he sees the student frantically flipping the coin and staring at his exam. "And what are you doing now?" asks the teacher.

"Checking my answers."

(James Hassett, in *Psychology Today*)

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLE STORIES

The House in the Country: If the mountain is to the west, the sun cannot come up from behind it, since the sun always rises in the east.

The Dollar Bills: She was short by $4.00. She had read the number upside down. The number was 86.

Crossing the Bridge: Tom was a juggler. He juggled the pineapples while he crossed the bridge.

Finding the Light Ball: Divide the balls into three groups of three balls each. Place two of the three groups on opposite ends of the scale. This will determine the group that is the lightest, if the lightest ball is contained in one of these groups of three. If the groups balance on the scale, then the lightest ball is in the group of three not being weighed.

Now take the group of three that contains the lightest ball and make your second test on the scales. Place one ball on each side of the balance scale. If the scale does not balance, the side containing the lighter ball will rise. If the scale balances, the ball not being weighed is the one that weighs the least.

---

[1] *Flipping a coin:* flicking it into the air with the thumbnail so it will fall to rest, at random, on one side or the other.

[2] "Heads" is the obverse (principal side) of the coin; "tails" is the reverse (other side). If the coin lands with the "heads" side up, he writes "true"; if "tails," he writes "false."

* United States Government Printing Office:1980--316-810/6103

Acknowledgments

"Integrating Group Work with the Teaching of Grammar," by Marianne Celce-Murcia, is reprinted, with some editorial changes, from *UCLA Workpapers in TESL*, Vol. 12 (1978). Used by permission. A version of this article was presented as a paper at the CATESOL Conference, San Diego, 26 March 1977.

In accordance with the copyright law effective 1 January 1978, any article in this issue *not attributed to another source, either in the acknowledgments above or elsewhere in these pages*, may be reprinted if permission to do so is obtained from the author. Permission to reprint articles from another source must be obtained from the original publisher.

The ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM, a quarterly journal for the teacher of English outside the United States, is provided by the Embassy of the United States of America located in the country of distribution. Occasional copies and regular subscriptions are available through the Embassy.

Manuscripts and letters to the editor should be sent to Room 708, 1717 H Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20547. To be considered for publication, manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced with margins of at least three centimeters. Questions about subscriptions should be addressed to the American Embassy in the capital city of the country in which the inquirer resides. Requests for subscriptions should *not* be sent to the editor.

OCT 3 0 1980

672-F

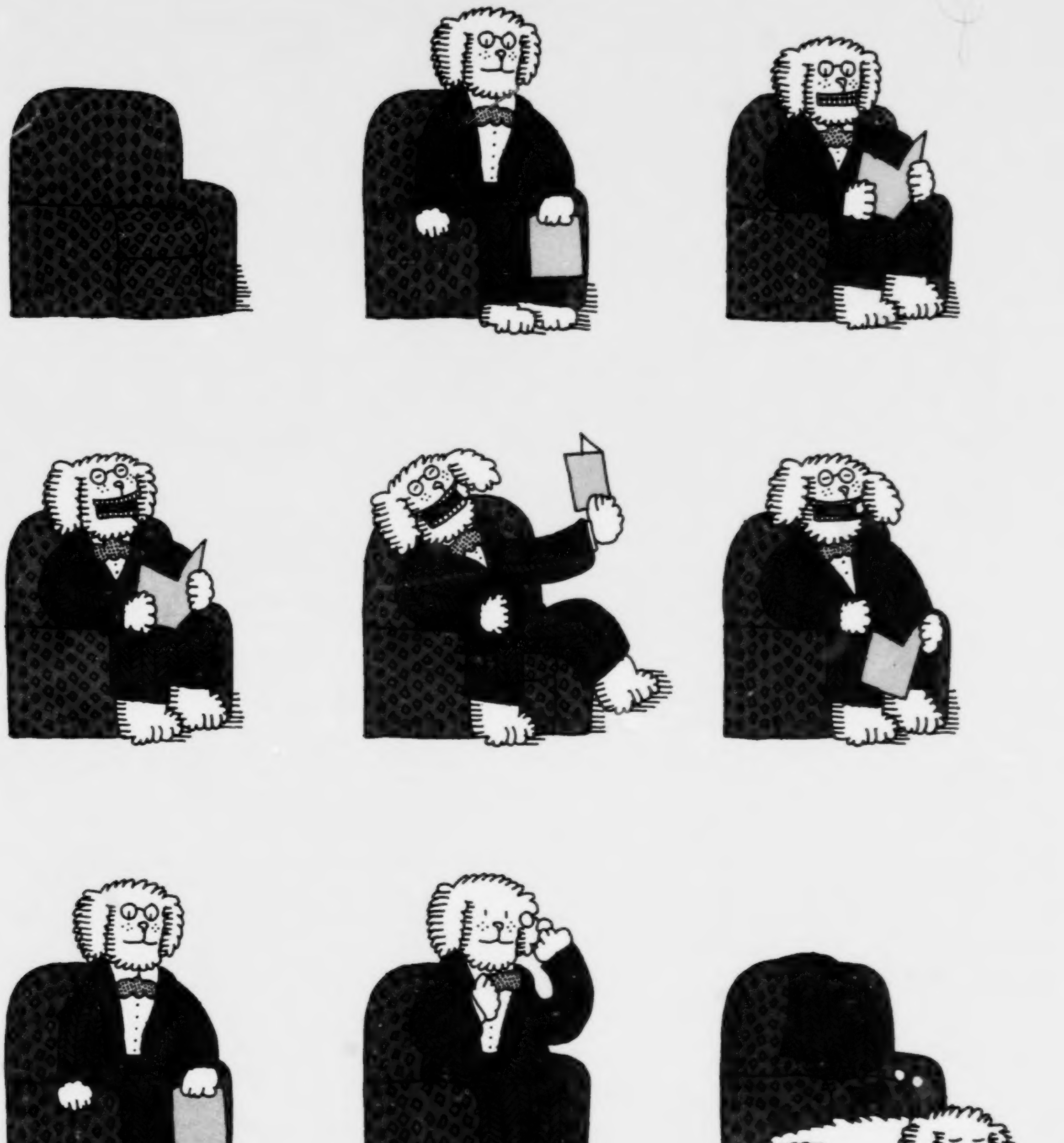
ICA 1.11:18/4

FORUM

ENGLISH
TEACHING
FORUM
A JOURNAL
FOR THE TEACHER
OF ENGLISH
OUTSIDE THE
UNITED
STATES

8973

Volume XVIII Number 4 October 1980



Editorial

Conversations in our native language with friends and colleagues convince us that the ability to listen is an attribute greatly in need of cultivation. And those who have traveled in foreign lands have learned—sometimes through hard experience—that understanding the spoken language is often more important than speaking it well.

Of the four traditional language skills, listening comprehension may well be the most difficult to master, simply because it happens (or fails to happen) unseen and unheard. It is often difficult for the listener, as well as his interlocutors, to know whether or how well he has understood. At best this comprehension can be measured only through some secondary means, and then with questionable accuracy.

Add to all this the variety of accents and levels and kinds of English that may be heard, and it is small wonder that listening comprehension often seems too formidable a skill for the teacher to cope with, and so is relegated to a sort of limbo with the hope that it will somehow grow and flourish without the careful nurturing lavished on the other skills.

In this issue we have combined a focus on listening with a recording of a type of humorous anecdote that we hope will provide some useful material for listening activities (as suggested in Kalivoda's article). The aim of these anecdotes is twofold (as Peter Fischel points out): "to get the class to leave the lesson with a smile on its collective face, and to practice listening comprehension." We are aware of both the dangers and potential rewards that Schabacker mentions: "Teaching a foreign language is difficult. Teaching a foreign sense of humor is more difficult, but it is also more valuable in facilitating the student's acceptance of the language."

We call our anecdotes "shaggy dog stories." What is a shaggy dog story? The following definitions are from, respectively, the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language,* and the *World Book Dictionary:* "A long, drawn-out anecdote depending for humor upon an absurd or anticlimactic punch line....A humorous anecdote with a surprise ending involving ludicrously unreal or irrational behavior....A story which relates, usually at great length, a number of unimportant incidents in building up to an unexpected or ridiculous climax." The definition in *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Merriam-Webster) may strike many readers as the most accurate description of the stories we have included: "A long-drawn-out circumstantial story concerning an inconsequential happening that impresses the teller as humorous but the hearer as boring and pointless; also: a similar humorous story whose humor lies in the pointlessness or irrelevance of the punch line."

As one writer points out, the "combination of gradual expectation and sudden frustration is the key to the peculiar effectiveness and appeal of the shaggy-dog story. ...Essentially, the shaggy-dog story is a hoaxing story (sometimes called 'spoof' story) with the reader himself being taken in by the trick ending. The sudden unexpectedness of the *non sequitur* or 'inconsequent' conclusion belongs to the humor of...the 'irony of fate,' in which life itself follows the shaggy-dog pattern of lead-in, build-up, and letdown, nothing turns out as expected, and in the end the joke is on us" (Botkin, *Treasury of American Anecdotes,* p.256).

We hope that our stories will be neither a frustration nor a letdown to our readers, and that they will produce a semblance, at least, of that collective smile.

—A.C.N.

80 386 (58)

FORUM

ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM
A JOURNAL FOR THE TEACHER OF ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

DO YOU REGULARLY READ A DAILY NEWSPAPER?
SOMETIMES YES SOMETIMES NO

CZECHOSLOVAK FOLK ARCHITECTURE

Volume XVIII
October 1980
Number 4

Anne Covell Newton
Editor

Joni Lynn Thompson
Editorial Assistant

Acknowledgments and copyright notices appear inside back cover or with copyrighted item

Cover design
Guy Schum

Learning to Listen—What Can Be Done? 2
THEODORE KALIVODA, *University of Georgia*

Joke Telling as a Tool in ESL 8
SUSAN TRACHTENBERG, *University of Pennsylvania*

Structured Experiences for Group Activity 13
JIM BRIMS, *The British Council, Munich*

Hearing and Comprehending 16
WILGA M. RIVERS, *Harvard University*

Ten Shaggy Dog Stories 20

Graded Interviews for Communicative Practice 26
PAUL NATION, *Victoria University of Wellington*

Activities for Communication Practice 30
AUSTIN SANDERS, *British Senegalese Institute for the Teaching of English, Dakar*

An Effective Method for Teaching English Verb Forms 33
ROBERT HAYMOND, *The University of Alberta*

NEWS AND IDEAS

Chile. Establishing Behavioral Objectives, OMER SILVA V. 37

Czechoslovakia. Double-Purpose Language Lessons, DUŠAN JOSEF 38

Germany. Why Murder Your Pupils When They Can Laugh Themselves to Death? PETER FISCHEL 39

Nepal. The TESOL Wall Newspaper, DAVID JARMUL 41

Poland. Teaching English to Students of Economics, MAŁGORZATA ZDYBIEWSKA 41

Saudi Arabia. Using Bulletin Boards to Advantage, CLYDE D. SCHABACKER 42

Taiwan. Ability-Grouping Freshman English Classes, LING-LING WANG 43

Thailand. An Approach to Group Discussion, TED GOLDENBERG 44

Zaire. Teaching English Composition, MUAKA LUSALA LONA 45

LETTERS

India. On Teaching Poetry to Children, RATHINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAY 46

Italy. A Response to "The Notional Syllabus," NANCY RENNAU TUMPOSKY 47

Malaysia. A Request for Back Issues, NORRIDAH KATUN 47

THE LIGHTER SIDE 48

Learning to Listen–What Can Be Done?

THEODORE B. KALIVODA
University of Georgia

Theodore B. Kalivoda is associate professor of foreign language education at the University of Georgia, where he teaches English, Spanish, and foreign-language methodology. He has published numerous articles and monographs on foreign-language teaching, three of which have won him national awards. Dr. Kalivoda is a frequent contributor at national and international conferences.

Listening is probably the most neglected of the four language skills. This neglect causes problems that frustrate, embarrass, and discourage the learner.

Soon after stepping off the plane in a country where his second language is spoken, the learner begins to see that, although his speaking ability may allow him to meet basic needs, his ability to understand the spoken language leaves much to be desired. His first experience might be to try to catch the garbled, muffled message on the terminal's loudspeaker system. It may sound so strange that our poor traveler wonders whether he is in the right country. At this point some degree of panic usually sets in. Am I going to have this kind of trouble, he asks, during my whole stay? Have my years of foreign-language study been one big deception? he wonders. Although he may have been highly successful in his secondary-school and university conversation courses, he is woefully lacking in the ability to comprehend the spoken language. What is wrong?

I shall direct my attention to three major areas relating to the problem: (1) the difficulty of remembering the messages contained in extended speech; (2) the rapid-sounding pace of the speech, with its accompanying slurred qualities, which contrast with the deliberate and well-articulated talk most often heard in the classroom; and (3) the overwhelming number of unfamiliar words heard. These problems suggest the great difference between listening in a foreign language and listening in the native language.

For organizational reasons I shall deal with these three categories separately. However, the latter two—speed of speech, and vocabulary—should be considered as subsumed under the general heading of memory or retention.

MEMORY

Almost a decade ago Rivers (1971) applied the concept of memory to second-language listening, pointing out that a listener may comprehend short utterances and yet have trouble remembering the information of extended speech. Why is this so? It is partly due to his failure to distinguish between items of high and low information value, and to anticipate these. He tends to listen to every word, thus committing the first cardinal sin: disregarding redundancy. (For example, the sentence *All the girls are going dressed in their jeans* establishes a plural subject [*girls*] and includes a redundancy of this plurality in the words *all, are,* and *their*.) The basic problem with listening to every word is that it hinders the student from keeping up. By the time he is on the third word, the speaker is on the sixth. And the longer the message, the further behind the listener gets.

A more complex problem is that the student lacks time to mentally process the information, a phenomenon known as "rehearsal"—an *active* processing to assist recall. I emphasize the word *active* because it gives us a more comprehensive view of listening comprehension than does the common superficial assumption that listening is a passive operation.

More will be said about this later.

The idea of chunking

We can get further insight into what is involved in listening and retaining by examining the idea of *chunking*. Chunking has to do with the way we process information, the way we group into topics the various messages contained in the material. The human mind has an uncanny capacity for seeing how different parts of the content relate to one another. Take, for example, the following account of a party:

> Never in my life had I seen such an array of things to eat—shrimp, caviar, all kinds of meats and relish trays. And wow, you should have seen the way it was arranged—like something out of Hollywood, with big red roses placed in strategic positions along with candles and napkins and tiny plates. They all picked up the red theme, but each in a different hue. Oh, I forgot to mention, there were even shades of red in the wine—burgundy, pink, and rosé. It created a stunning effect. And the wine, well, it was...it was just exquisite. We must have emptied twenty-five bottles. Then as the evening drew on we enjoyed brandy, cognac, and coffee. While sipping my drink I moved around with the guests: top-ranking executives from business, government, education—you name it. But I guess what I liked most was that here were these important people who were willing to be themselves. No pretentious airs about them at all. The way they talked with you about your life rather than about their own accomplishments showed understanding and...well, I guess it showed...uh...sensitivity toward people, too. Anyway, I really enjoyed them. Then what do you suppose? One of them moved over to the piano and started improvising some really nice jazz. Hey, that was something. Everyone gathered around clapping to the beat and cheering him on. A few got so absorbed in the rhythm they couldn't resist moving off into a corner to dance. We all ended up with spontaneous singing of folk songs.

Listening to this description we would most likely chunk information into categories such as food, table setting, drink, people, activities, and music. These chunks would help us remember smaller details through association. Some listeners might even reduce the chunks to two by pulling together food, drink, and table setting, on the one hand, and people, activities, and music on the other. Rather than take a helter-skelter approach, then, to remembering a myriad of unorganized details (shrimp, roses, piano, etc.), we have grouped ideas into larger categories. This helps us remember the fine points.

We can pity the foreign-language student, for there is evidence that operations of this kind are more difficult in a second language (Lado 1965). In listening to oral directions, for example, the student, although understanding them one by one, has difficulty putting them together in order to carry out the entire set. What this amounts to is that items decline in strength as new ones enter the memory. Lado (1965) cites several experiments that support the notion that memory span is shorter in a second language. I suspect that many travelers, and others hearing a foreign language, experience frustration in forgetting portions of oral messages.

Providing practice in active processing

What the student needs is a practical means of applying the operation of active processing as he listens to oral material in the foreign language. How can we build activities into his practice sessions that will aid him in listening with retention? A basic assumption here is that given enough practice in active operations in the classroom, the student will improve in processing messages he hears in real situations. In other words, he will learn what he practices. But it is the teacher's task to organize and provide that practice, especially for the advanced student, whose classroom activity traditionally has dealt with written material.

For such practice it is requisite that rehearsal activities be manifested overtly, as in speech (or writing). Although internal speech, such as speaking to oneself subvocally, is recognized as a part of information processing, it probably should not constitute the sum of rehearsal. The instructor cannot look into the student's mind to observe what he is doing with the material; neither can the student himself know with certainty if he has grasped the content correctly without some form of teacher appraisal.

According to Carroll (1973), speaking is an excellent means of retrieving material. He asserts that the mental processing pertaining to listening comprehension depends on active attention to and manipulation of the content, an operation in which the active skill of speaking plays a great part. It is like having a goal in mind as we listen; knowing that the material must be recapitulated in some form through speech, we are more likely to listen in ways that facilitate that process.

Miller (1956:93), in his classic manuscript on the mind's capacity for processing information, underscores the significant role verbal behavior plays as a reinforcer of listening:

> The most customary kind of recoding that we do all the time is to translate into a verbal code. When there is a story or an argument or an idea that we want to remember, we usually try to rephrase it in our own words. When we witness some event we want to remember, we make a verbal description of the event and then remember our verbalization.

Oral Repetition. Let's look at some steps that can be taken for practicing verbalization in the foreign language. Perhaps the most elementary is that of oral repetition, in which the student repeats what he hears sentence by sentence. The value of this activity is stated succinctly by Rivers

(1971:130): "The very effort of repetition forces the student to segment the stream of sound in some fashion, the auditory image is longer retained, and the student has time to relate segments and to readjust his developing interpretation." This simple activity tends to sharpen listening skill, because it is hard to repeat an extensive sentence without understanding what you are saying.

Identifying Key Words. Mueller (1974) suggests a somewhat more refined type of repetition on the single-sentence level: students learn to avoid unessential information and to identify and repeat only key words—initially subject-verb-object, and later other elements. The student may be instructed to jot down key words as he hears them in a sentence, or to give them orally. For example, he might hear and repeat the following: *They went to the conference being held in the capital to learn some new teaching techniques.* Key words to be identified would be: *conference, learn, techniques.* The rest of the words are unimportant for grasping the basic message.

Paraphrase. Another approach to verbalization may be found in Godfrey's paraphrase technique, first using single sentences and later building up to paraphrases of paragraphs (Godfrey 1977). This has the advantage of being a more creative activity than mere mechanical manipulation through repetition.

Oral verbalizing (and written activity too, as with Mueller's keyword notations) on a single-sentence level followed by the paraphrasing of paragraphs forms a systematic approach to practice. The learner moves from simple to more complex activity to facilitate development of the listening skill.

Summarizing. Somewhat related to paraphrase is oral summarizing. I give it a special category because I see it used with larger units of material, for example, an entire event or story; consequently, it allows for greater freedom of self-expression. It is attractive because it relates closely to the concept of language as creative behavior. It also forms part of an orderly progression when preceded by oral verbalization activities of the type previously described.

I would point out, however, that summarizing is not an easy task. Even in one's native language it may require labor to group material for inclusive and orderly recapitulation. It might be well, therefore, to have the students develop skill in outlining first within the security of their native language in the form of review, and then in the foreign language. Summarizing is an activity in which the phenomena of chunking and rehearsal come into play on a large scale, which is important if the student is to learn to use these processes beyond the smaller segments of speech found in single sentences and paragraphs.

Answering Questions. Another means of verbalizing is to answer questions on the content of the passage listened to. This technique can take several forms. It can deal with objective facts (for example, *Where did Mr. Smith go after the robbery?*) or with subjective interpretation, as in making inferences (for example, *Why do you think he went there?*). It can also take oral form, written form, or both—as in oral dictation. But what seems especially important, if we are to train students to listen to main ideas, is to ask questions that focus on the skeletal content of the message rather than on trivia. How often the teacher, let alone the student, cannot remember answers to questions asked in the back of the textbook because they have to do with insignificant detail!

Simultaneous Listening and Reading Aloud. Yet another approach to oral activity may be found in Wu Yi So's suggestion to provide listening practice by supplying a script for verbalizing along with the listening material (Wu 1974). An additional benefit of this technique lies in a greater perception of the use of suprasegmentals, especially linking, through immediate comparison of the written symbols with the spoken word. Linking, although a characteristic of speech spoken at normal speed, causes comprehension problems for the student who has been exposed primarily to deliberate and carefully articulated talk. It is interesting to note a clear example of this artificial talk in the listening portion of a widely used achievement test.[1] Could the speech used for listening comprehension on a nationally normed exam be indicative of the kind of aural exposure we provide in the daily classroom? Are we setting our sights too low and thereby cheating our students?

This leads us to the next topic—listening to speech spoken at a rate of speed common to native speakers—which I shall call *rapid speech,* simply because it is so often perceived as such by even the advanced learner.

RAPID SPEECH

At the outset I referred to foreign-language students encountering problems with speed of speech. What Sherrow (1971) facetiously said of beginning students is applicable to advanced learners, too:

STUDENTS *(commenting to teacher)*: You're talking too fast.

TEACHER *(replying)*: You're listening too slowly.

As we have seen, keeping up with the speaker means listening to key words and becoming skilled in the chunking process. But there is another important factor: *spacing.* As listeners, we take advantage of spacing to understand the message and to remember it—to put it all together, so to speak. This certainly has implications for the speed of our listening material. Rather than slow down the speed of the speech, which is generally the speaker's first impulse when he sees that his listener is not following him, we can simply program the material with longer pauses. In other words, we continue to feed the student with rapid speech, but to help him get used to it we provide lengthy pauses. Of course, the goal is to lead him to listen with comprehension without abnormal spacing.

---

[1] MLA Cooperative FL Test (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1963).

We find support for the notion of spacing as related to retention in Johnson and Friedman's experimentation with second-language students, in which a space inserted between the kernel and the adjunct produced better recall. They interpreted this finding to mean that "a structurally segmented sentence was perceived and remembered as a coherent linguistic entity while the non-spaced sentence tended to be heard merely as a string of weakly related words" (Johnson and Friedman 1974:165–69).

This kind of practice lends itself well to taped materials in which we can either build in pauses or instruct the student to stop the tape whenever he feels a need for rehearsal.

VOCABULARY

The third problem area pertains to the student's limited lexical knowledge. Chances are that listening to an in-depth conversation in the target language on almost any topic will leave the learner groping for the meaning of several unfamiliar words. Why is this so? Lord reminds us that

> vocabulary is by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language, whether a foreign or one's mother tongue. As far as any of the world's major languages are concerned, every other aspect of language learning is dwarfed by the proliferation of different meanings in their tens of thousands, and by the seemingly infinite shifts in meaning brought about by the contextual variables (Lord 1974:239).

Another important consideration is the student's ability to distinguish between words that he can manipulate when speaking and those he must cope with when listening. His speaking vocabulary comprises a rather narrow range of words that he can speak at his own pace and in accord with his own purposes; the words that make up the reply he receives are not under his control in terms of either choice or rate of speed (Ingram 1975).

The root of the problem is insufficient aural exposure. Subjecting the learner at a given point to what Carroll calls "massive amounts of spoken material" (Carroll 1975:358) seems essential. A frequent argument against doing this is that new words are presented in an unorganized and haphazard fashion. But this criticism loses its force when we consider that even advanced language learners fall far short of commanding all of the active vocabulary commonly used by native speakers. Such vocabulary will vary, to be sure, depending on the nature of the discourse, but it will always include words which, although of low frequency, are part of the active repertoire of the native speaker (Twaddell 1973:61–78). Coming to grips with this fact is essential for understanding what is involved in massive vocabulary expansion. Twaddell gets to the core of it in a statement that wryly echoes Lincoln's supposed remark: "Speakers must love the low-frequency words, because they use so many of them" (Twaddell 1972:272).[2]

Dictation of troublesome words

An interesting teaching technique for expanding the student's knowledge of vocabulary consists of extracting from listening material words that are anticipated to be troublesome, presenting them through dictation, and then perhaps calling for oral repetition.[3] The student's attention is thus called to the occurrence of the words, and if the dictation includes their use in a sentence, attention is likewise focused on use in context. An interesting variation of the word-in-sentence approach, involving creative use of the language, is to direct the student to write a new sentence using the word in question.

In the interest of saving time some teachers may not want to burden the student with a taped vocabulary section but may prefer to provide a written word list for consultation and learning. Whether such a word list is written or entirely oral, it is necessarily limited in scope, because there will always be some troublesome words in the listening material that the teacher had not anticipated as such. The student will need to stop the tape in order to look up the meanings of these words in a dictionary.

Multiple-choice exercises

Another way to help students learn new vocabulary is through the use of multiple-choice exercises. However, it is difficult to design such exercises in the foreign language, because of the need to restrict choices to vocabulary the student knows. A reasonable solution may be to give the choices in the native language.

Identifying connectors, false starts, and attention claimers

So far I have discussed general vocabulary expansion to aid the listening process. There is a certain class of words that I have not dealt with but which are important because they help the listener tie together extended speech (Godfrey 1977). They might be called *connectors*, because they signal certain relationships between phrases, that is, what went before (for example, *Oh, I forgot to mention. . .You remember that I said . . .*) and what is to come (*Anyway . . .As I was saying . . .*). Prior to presenting the listening material, you might comb it for connectors, and include them in the preparatory section on vocabulary. The anticipated result is to make the listener aware of the facilitating role of this vocabulary for rehearsal through a kind of flashback, and for making predictions.

---

[2] EDITOR'S NOTE: Abraham Lincoln's statement is: "The Lord prefers common-looking people. That is the reason he makes so many of them" (as quoted by Hay, *Diary*, Dec. 24, 1863). This saying is sometimes paraphrased as "The Lord must love the common people because he makes so many of them."

[3] For experimental evidence on the value of repetition, see: Mansanori Higa, "The Psycholinguistic Concept of 'Difficult' and the Teaching of Foreign Language Vocabulary," 292–303, in K. Croft, ed., *Readings on English as a Second Language* (Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, 1972).

Other vocabulary classifications might include *attention claimers* (*Hey . . .Look . . .*) and *false starts* (*Well, er . . . Uh, you see . . .*). I suppose these would form a part of what Mueller (1974) classifies as sensing, in which the student rejects irrelevant words as noise. As in the case of connectors, false starts and attention claimers might be identified in the listening material and made part of the vocabulary section. The objective, however, would be different: the student is to learn to avoid giving this language undue attention.

THE QUESTION OF MATERIALS

Having identified the need for developing skill in advanced listening comprehension, and having underscored the importance of massive practice in the classroom and laboratory for facilitating it, I now turn to the question of obtaining materials for programming. Teachers, as programmers, face a serious lack of materials with which to work. Tapes available for advanced classes are extremely limited as compared to the wealth of textbooks on the market. This probably contributes to the lack of listening activity found in the foreign-language classroom.

A search for materials can begin with the catalogues of the various publishing houses. Some taped items appropriate for advanced students, such as anecdotes, fairy tales, speeches, and dramas, can be found. This oral material can be used as foundational matter for listening assignments.

Another potential source is printed materials, such as books, magazines, and newspapers, appropriately altered to meet the requirements of normal speech, and then recorded. By *altered* I mean putting it into a form characteristic of spoken language. Shortening the sentences is the most obvious change needed (we seldom go beyond ten or so words when we speak—written sentences are generally much more complex). But perhaps a harder requirement is to use the proper intonation—one that reflects spontaneous speaking rather than oral reading. Some practice runs prior to the actual recording of the script will prove helpful.

My experience is that, as with any kind of language practice, students enjoy a variety of materials. They like working with a contemporary drama, but they also welcome shorter and lighter pieces, such as anecdotes with surprise endings.

A SAMPLE SCRIPT

We shall now look at what a script of the various elements of the oral program might be like. Its rehearsal activities will vary according to the type of listening material used. A planned, formal speech, for example, would probably not contain false starts, repetitions, and attention claimers. On the other hand, a dialogue, or a spontaneous description such as the monologue about the party that was presented earlier in this article, might contain all of the rehearsal activities discussed. Using that monologue, we might design a script somewhat as follows:

I. Introduction

"Have you ever attended a party where you were overwhelmed by its elegance and where you were able to meet and mingle with important people? Here's a description of such a party. Maybe you can identify with some of it. Don't worry if you don't understand everything the first time. Sit back, relax, and listen. You'll have a chance to hear it more than once."

II. Listening Content

III. Rehearsal Activities

A. Dictation

1. New Words

"You probably found some parts hard to understand—one reason being unknown vocabulary. To help with this, we'll look at the new words. Learning them will aid you when you listen to the material again later on.

"If this is the first time you have listened to the material, continue on with the next part. If it's your second listening, fast forward your tape to footage ____ and pick up there. (Pause.) Write the following words in your Vocabulary Notebook. Your teacher will check it periodically. You may also find it helpful to repeat the words orally. This is your choice. Ready? Write:

(1) *Shrimp* (Native-language equivalent) *s-h-r-i-m-p*" etc.

2. Sentences

"To get a better 'feel' for how the words are used, write the following sentences.

(1) *He bought a pound of shrimp at the seafood market*." etc.

B. Student Creativity in Writing Sentences

"See if you can create your own sentences for each of the new words. Refer to the words you've written in your notebook. Making a heading in your notebook entitled *original sentences*, write your own sentence for each word. Your teacher will check your work later. Now stop the tape and write."

C. Multiple-Choice Exercises

"Here's an interesting exercise to check how well you've learned the vocabulary. You'll be given a sentence and then a repetition of one of its words. Match that word with one of the three choices provided. For example, *I never saw such an array of foods*. Which word best matches *array: table*? *tray*? *variety*?

"Did you select *variety*? That's the right one.

Now continue with the rest of the exercise."

D. Other Words

"There may be other words you don't know, in addition to those we have anticipated. You should jot down these words and look up their meaning in the dictionary.

"Some things in the listening material probably still elude you because of the rapid speech. There are some steps you can take to help yourself listen more rapidly. Let's take a look at them."

E. Recognizing Connectors

"Becoming familiar with the words used to connect thoughts can help us keep up with the rapid speech. Here are some of them. Write them in your notebook under the title *Connectors*.

1. *Oh, I forgot to mention*—as used in:
   Oh, I forgot to mention, there were even shades of red in the wine: red, pink, and rose.
2. *And the wine*—as used in:
   It created a stunning effect. And the wine, well, it was really . . . .
3. *Anyway*—as used in:
   Anyway, I really enjoyed them.
4. *Then what do you suppose?*—as used in:
   Then what do you suppose? One of them moved over to the piano . . . ."

F. Identifying False Starts, Repetitions, and Attention Claimers

"You will also hear a number of words used as the speaker hesitates, perhaps as he gropes for the right words to say. Likewise, you'll hear words used as attention getters. Here are those:

1. *And wow*—as used in:
   And wow, you should have seen the way it was arranged.
2. *Well, it was—it was*—as used in:
   And the wine, well, it was—it was just exquisite.
3. *Well, I guess it showed—uh*—as used in:
   The way they talked with you about your life rather than what they had accomplished or what they were doing showed understanding and, *well, I guess it showed—uh*—sensitivity toward people, too.
4. *Hey*—as used in:
   Hey, that was something."

G. Selective Identification of Key Words

"To help increase your understanding of the content, we'll isolate certain sentences. Your assignment is to identify only the words that are absolutely necessary for understanding the idea of each sentence. This exercise is to help you learn to listen selectively and more rapidly. Ready? Write down key words in your notebook under the heading *identifying key words:*

Never in my life have I ever seen such an array of things to eat.

Which words did you choose? Were they *never /seen/array/things/eat*?

Continue with the rest of the sentences on your own."

H. Selective Oral Repetition

"Another help for understanding the content is to repeat certain phrases and sentences. Here are some of them. After each one, stop the recorder and try to repeat what you heard."

I. Selective Paraphrase of Sentences

"Now let's see if you can change sentences by saying them in different ways. For example, for the utterance *Never in my life have I seen such an array of things to eat,* you might say, *I was surprised to see so much food*.

Now try changing the following sentences. Write them for your teacher to check. Make a heading for it in your notebook entitled *Sentence Paraphrase*."

J. Re-listening with Spacing

"In this section you will hear sections with abnormally long pauses. This should help you remember the messages immediately preceding the pauses—messages that you may have lost before."

K. Question/Answer Practice

"Here's another test of how much you really understood. A list of questions will be dictated. Write the questions. To allow time to write, stop the tape after each question. Ready? Write:

What kinds of food were on the table? etc.

Now answer the questions in writing. If you need to hear the material again, go back to footage ____. When finished, show your work to your teacher. Do not go to the next part of the tape until your work has been approved."

L. Simultaneous Listening and Oral Reading

"This is your last listening assignment. You are to do it using the written script that the teacher has given you. Read aloud with the voice on the tape. Notice that linking takes place: vowels with vowels as well as vowels with consonants. Now go back to the listening material on the tape at footage ____, and read aloud with the tape."

M. Oral Summarizing

"You have come to the last part of the assignment—speaking. Congratulations for having come this far. You will give an oral resumé of the listening material to the teacher. To prepare yourself, write a brief outline of the main points. Use

continued on page 12

Joke Telling as a Tool in ESL

SUSAN TRACHTENBERG
University of Pennsylvania

Susan Trachtenberg teaches in the English Program for Foreign Students at the University of Pennsylvania. She has presented papers on ESL subjects at the 1978 TESOL conference in Mexico City and at the 1980 TESOL conference in San Francisco. Mrs. Trachtenberg is at present preparing a book of jokes for ESL teachers and students (with coauthor Stephanie Forman of Temple University).

In this article I intend to show how jokes, when used carefully and systematically, can be an important resource for the teacher in the ESL classroom.

WHY TO USE JOKES

First, let us consider a general question: why, in theory, should we focus our attention on a joke—or any speech act, for that matter? We all know, in a general way, that teaching a language involves—or should involve—a great deal more than just transmitting the linguistic code of that language. The field of sociolinguistics has had its impact on TESOL. We know now that the teaching of appropriate speech behavior—what to say to whom, and when to say it—is as important as the teaching of grammar. After all, language is a social phenomenon. Robert Di Pietro argues this point cogently:

> If the conveying of information were the sole reason for human speech, we would certainly have evolved neater, more precise codes than the logically messy languages we now have. To relate a message with clarity and directness we do not need all those paraphrases which we must master in order to speak a new language. In fact, computer languages are much better at processing semantic content than any natural language in the world (Di Pietro 1976:49).

Means to an end

Since we are teachers not of a computer language but of a natural language, we cannot be content with teaching our students the linguistic code of English. We think in terms of Paulston's notion of communicative competence (Paulston 1975), which must include all levels of linguistic competence, starting with phonetic, going through to phonemic, then semantic, then syntactic, on to speech patterns and, finally, to speech behavior. I would like to put even communicative competence in its place, and suggest that it too is a means toward an end. What is the end? It is the same as the end of language: projection of personality. It is the ability of our students to project their personalities, to be themselves, in English.

The projection of a sense of humor is a key element that must be encouraged if the student of English as a second language is to be himself in an English-speaking milieu. As teachers, we can and do encourage this humor in a number of ways—with games, with funny questions, and, perhaps most importantly, with an atmosphere in the class that puts the students at their ease. We all know, for example, that a role-play exercise is far more productive if the students are at ease with one another and with the teacher; the interchange is freer and more complex. For this reason, role-plays are generally best put off until the members of the class have gotten to know each other.

This is a somewhat condensed and revised version of an article published in the March 1979 issue of the *TESOL Quarterly*. Used by permission of the publisher.

The speech acts that we now teach, as suggested by Paulston in her interaction material—greetings, partings, apologies, introductions, white lies[1]—are selected in part so that, in addition to serving as models of speech behavior, they also reinforce points of grammar and vocabulary that have already been taught. The speech events that Paulston suggests in her role-play material—telephone calls, parties, meetings—provide a more inclusive framework for our students' learning of appropriate speech behavior. But we have not made use of jokes for this purpose.

The value of jokes

To give you an idea of what we have been missing, I will run briefly through a number of points in the joke's favor, points that I will cover in greater depth later on. (1) Jokes are short, and can be told—or taught—within the space of a few minutes. They are a mini-lesson in grammar, vocabulary, and speech patterns. (2) Like any speech act, they are rule-governed. There are rules of sequencing to be learned. These rules change from culture to culture. (3) There is a wide range of possible speech patterns within the single genre of joke. They can take the form of question and answer, or narrative. They contain insult, dialogue, apology, and just about anything else. (4) Jokes are common to all cultures, so we can confidently elicit them from our students. (5) Jokes embody a culture, and are therefore a means of transmitting the spirit of the culture of the target language to our students. (6) Speech behavior that is learned by listening to and telling jokes can be generalized to speech acts other than the joke, namely narratives and conversation. And finally, (7) Jokes are funny. This has obvious advantages. It relaxes the tension in the classroom. It keeps students from falling asleep, and it keeps the teacher entertained—not a negligible virtue, since the high spirits of the teacher can set the tone for the whole class.

How to Use Jokes

But how, in practice, can jokes be used? I am going to consider two broad categories of jokes: (1) the riddle and the joking question, and (2) the narrative joke.

Riddles and joking questions

American children think of riddles as jokes. When children begin to tell jokes, at the age of five or six, these are usually riddles. It is only later that narrative verbal competence is developed. Adult Americans think of riddles as childish and corny,[2] and so rarely tell them. Yet riddles can be useful to an ESL teacher.

True Riddles. Consider the following true riddles:

What has legs, but cannot walk? A table.

What has hands and a face, but doesn't wash its face? A clock.

What has teeth but cannot bite? A comb.

This is the simplest kind of riddle—the true riddle. The question presents an anomalous description to the listener. The listener is challenged to use his wit to figure out the answer. The answer supplies the referent, which explains the anomaly. In fact, such riddles make use of existing metaphors that have become part of the language: hands, face, teeth, and legs are part of human anatomy. These words are so ingrained in our language—such second nature to native speakers—that they are hardly perceived as metaphors at all. Yet to students of ESL this is new vocabulary, or, more precisely, old vocabulary extended to new uses. The words thus taught are in fact common and useful. (When told the riddle about the hands of a clock, an Arabic student informed me that in his language the hands of a clock are called "scorpion.") So you are presenting vocabulary, but in the context of a riddling challenge.

True riddles such as these are easy to find (there are riddle collections), easy to tell, and generally easy to understand. They have great charm and appeal in that they are a part of our traditional folklore. Here is a true riddle in verse form:

In spring I am gay
In handsome array
In summer more clothing I wear.
When colder it grows
I fling off my clothes
And in winter quite naked appear. (A tree.)

Note that the simple, true riddles either begin with *What* or have no interrogative, but simply present a description. You can, and should, use them to reinforce *What*-questions, both positive and negative.

Joking Questions. Consider the following joking riddles, and notice their interrogative forms, and the kinds of ambiguity they involve:

What has four wheels and flies? A garbage truck.

This joking riddle depends on the lexical ambiguity of the word *flies*, which in the question appears to be a verb and in the solution is used as a noun.[3] It is this syntactic shift that makes the riddle funny, and which must be understood in order for the student to "get" the riddle.

What is black and white and /rɛd/ all over? A newspaper.

Here the student must understand the phonological ambiguity of *red* and *read* (past participle).[4]

When is a door not a door? When it's ajar.

Again, shifting syntax. The article *a* shifts from a morpheme in the question to a phoneme in the answer.[5]

---

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE: A *white lie* is "a lie regarded as excusable because it concerns a trivial matter and is told out of politeness, etc., and without harmful intent" (*Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition*).

[2] EDITOR'S NOTE: *corny* = unsophisticated; tiresomely simple.

[3] EDITOR'S NOTE: The question is ambiguous. It seems to ask "What is it that has four wheels and that flies?" The answer implies that the question should be taken in its less obvious alternative meaning: "What is it that has four wheels and has flies (around it)?"

[4] EDITOR'S NOTE: This time-worn riddle must, of course, be given orally, since it depends on the fact that the adjective *red* and the past participle *read* are phonologically identical although distinct in spelling.

How do you make a slow horse fast? Don't give him anything to eat for a while. Again, shifting syntax, together with the lexical ambiguity of *fast*.[6]

Notice that joking questions can include almost any interrogative form; they can be selected to reinforce the interrogative form of your choice. In the process, you are reinforcing the use of *can* and *do* auxiliaries ("What has legs but doesn't [*or* can't] walk?") and subject-auxiliary inversion ("When is a joke not a joke?").

The fact that these riddles are dependent on phonological ambiguities, or puns, makes them instructive. In my experience, students feel a sense of achievement when they "get" these riddles.[7] There is a fine article by Michel Monnot and Jon Kite, "Puns and Games: Paronomasia in the ESL classroom," which describes in great detail how puns in advertising, far from being confusing, can be used to clarify and teach.[8] Since the riddles are meant to be amusing, and not side-splittingly funny,[9] they can be told, and dissected and explained afterwards, without too much sacrifice. The vocabulary need not be presented first; we are, in part, using the jokes to teach vocabulary. The beauty of it all is that you are reinforcing interrogative patterns and teaching vocabulary all in the course of a real speech event, riddling. Since riddling is a bona fide speech event in almost all cultures, the telling of one riddle will often elicit the telling of more riddles. In the course of telling riddles to your class, you are very likely to get a few from your students. Here is one student's riddle: When you feed it, it grows; when you give it something to drink, it dies: A fire.

We may think of the riddles and joking questions we present to our students as, essentially, models of questions, just as our overt questions to them during class ("Reza, what did you eat last night?") are models of a particular interrogative pattern. But the riddles are not presented as models, or even as straight, overt questions. They are not perceived by the students as having anything to do with grammar; they are presented in a spirit of fun and challenge. Therefore they make the interrogative form have more meaning and depth for our students.

Thus, although it may be more difficult to find joking questions that reinforce grammar points than it is to find ordinary questions that do so, there is a payoff. A joking situation is real. Riddling and joke-telling are speech events that can be created in class. Note that they are created, not simulated. Most of the material we use in our aural/oral classes is simulated. We ask our students what they ate for dinner, not because we really want to know, but because we want them to give us an answer in the past tense. The real speech event of conversation will more likely take place before or after class. During class, we ask them questions so that we can teach them; we simulate a conversation so that our students will talk. So Reza says, "I ate spaghetti and french fries last night," and we are satisfied. There is an implicit agreement between student and teacher to suspend normal speech behavior and participate in a simulated speech event in order to learn. The epitome of this simulation is the role-play. There is nothing wrong with having one of your students pretend he is a used-car salesman in class; the role-play is invaluable for learning appropriate speech behavior and for reinforcing what has been learned. But asking riddles and telling jokes creates a real speech event that can occur naturally in any ESL class.

The narrative joke

When we think of jokes, we tend to think of them as narratives. In fact, many of the jokes we laugh at when we watch television or go to the movies are situational—jokes which, when retold, must be told in narrative form. For example, in a cartoon on television, a man sits down at a table in a restaurant and asks, "Do you serve crabs here?" The waiter says, "Sure, sit down. We serve anybody."[10] I have just told this in narrative form, beginning with "A man sits down in a restaurant...," but it was originally a situational joke.

In choosing jokes to use in class we must avoid, as much as possible, choosing material that is culture-bound. You may wonder: how can a joke not be culture-bound, since by its very nature it is part of a culture? That is one of the main reasons we avoid telling jokes to our students: they do not seem to travel well from culture to culture. And for that same reason our students are shy of telling us jokes. They feel that their jokes will not translate well. I would like to suggest that many of the jokes we hear and tell each other are not especially culture-bound. Here is an example:

---

[5] EDITOR'S NOTE: This riddle is somewhat different from the others in this group and, particularly for the nonnative speaker, perhaps a little subtler. The form of the question implies that the answer will be "(A door is not a door) when it's a ---," and the expectation is that the word following *a* will be a predicate noun (parallel to *a door* in the question). *A jar* satisfies this formal expectation, but makes no semantic sense (since to say a door is a jar is nonsense). However, the listener immediately realizes that the speaker must be saying that the door is *ajar* (an adjective meaning "slightly open"), which makes good semantic sense and is also a very likely phrase, since *ajar* is often used as a predicate adjective describing a door.

[6] EDITOR'S NOTE: This riddle is identical in form with the first one (about the garbage truck). The ambiguity of the question depends on the two (or more) possible meanings of *fast*. Because of the presence of the adjective *slow*, the most likely meaning of *fast* in the question would seem to be the adjectival: "How do you make a slow horse (become a) fast (horse)?" The answer that is given, of course, implies that the questioner was using the verb *fast*: "How do you make a slow horse abstain from eating?" (Another meaning of the adjective *fast*—"firmly fixed; not movable"—suggests yet a third possibility, with an answer something like: "Tie him with a strong short rope.")

[7] EDITOR'S NOTE: The "all-purpose" word *get* here means understand, catch on to (understand the double meaning, humor, etc.).

[8] EDITOR'S NOTE: See References at the end of this article.

[9] EDITOR'S NOTE: *side-splitting* = extremely funny.

[10] EDITOR'S NOTE: This joke depends on two ambiguities: (1) the verb *serve* can take two different objects: (*a*) the thing (food) that is brought, and (*b*) the person to whom it is brought; and (2) *crab* can mean (*a*) a kind of seafood, or (*b*) an ill-tempered person.

"A man is driving a station wagon down a freeway, and the station wagon is full of penguins.[11] He has to take the penguins to the zoo, so he's in a hurry. All of a sudden, he gets a flat tire. Oh, no, how am I going to get these penguins to the zoo in time? So he gets out of the car and flags down another car. The other car stops. He says to the driver, Look, I've gotta get these penguins to the zoo. Please help me. Here's ten dollars; take them to the zoo for me. The other guy says O.K., takes the ten dollars, and the two of them unload the penguins from the station wagon and into the other guy's car. The guy with the station wagon starts fixing his flat tire, and after forty minutes he sees the other car coming back, but it is still filled with penguins. He flags the guy down again, says, What's the matter with you? Why are the penguins still in the car? I gave you ten dollars to take them to the zoo. The other guy says, Yeah, but I had some change, so I decided to take them to the movies."

Since the vast majority of our students come from cultures where there are zoos and movies, cars and flat tires, this joke presents no problem.[12]

I think it is best to tell many jokes to a class, simply for comprehension, before attempting to get the students to tell jokes. One or two jokes at the end of each class is a good way to begin. Think of the jokes as an aural exercise, and, just as with other aural exercises (a dialogue, a song, or a story), present new and unfamiliar vocabulary first. The vocabulary needed to get the joke may be minimal, but in some cases it is crucial. Sometimes—for the joke to be really funny—it is not enough for the vocabulary to be introduced immediately before the telling of a joke, it must already have been absorbed by students in previous lessons, so they have a working knowledge of it. For example:

"A guy walks into a psychiatrist's office. Doctor, Doctor, you gotta help me. I don't know what the matter is. Nobody talks to me. Nobody ever listens to me when I talk. *Doctor:* Next."

If this joke is used to teach the expression *next,* it will fall flat, and you will end up doing an autopsy on the joke. Since *next,* as an expression used by storekeepers, in auditions, in doctors' offices, etc., must already have been assimilated by the class, I would not tell this joke until I had used the term in class many times, notably in turn-taking situations, such as drills, where it naturally occurs. Perhaps this seems like a lot of trouble to go to for a joke, but if you notice the verbal expressions that you do use in class, and deliberately choose some expressions over others, you can select your jokes accordingly. You create a pattern in which a joke is reinforcing your speech behavior and vice versa.

Beginnings of narrative jokes

As you select and tell your jokes, you begin to note the patterns used for this speech act. It is important for the teacher to become aware of these verbal strategies. The beginning of a joke, particularly, tends to follow a specific form. Consider:

A guy walks into a psychiatrist's office...

This man is driving down the freeway with a truckload of penguins...

We can immediately observe that, like other spoken narratives, jokes are often told in the historical present tense. The beginning of the joke usually contains a brief description of the main character of the joke. Here we often use the demonstrative: *this old lady, this fat man, this guy who is drunk,* etc. The first sentence of a joke sets the scene, giving the listener a brief description of the person involved and the situation.

After we have told our students many jokes for comprehension, some of them may want the opportunity to retell a joke. If some students are motivated to learn and retell the jokes, they should be given the opportunity to do so, but this should not be forced on them. Just as with riddles and joking questions, at this stage just "getting" a joke in the target language is in itself an achievement.

Retelling the joke can be handled in a variety of ways. The use of a tape recorder to replay the joke can be helpful. The students may want to have a written text of the joke, so they can "follow" it, much as they might follow the lyrics of a song. I strongly suggest they not be shown such a text until the joke has been told and retold. We must bear in mind that the joke is an oral form of expression, and that we are using it as an aural/oral tool. By reading a written transcript of the joke early on, the students will be missing the point of the aural/oral exercise. Jokes are meant to be told, not read.

---

[11] Editor's Note: A *station wagon* is an automobile with an extended interior and rear seats that fold or can be removed for easy loading, unloading, and cartage of luggage or other goods. A *freeway* is a highway having several lanes and no intersections or stoplights. A *penguin* is a short-legged, flightless aquatic bird of the southern hemisphere, with webbed feet and paddlelike flippers for swimming and diving. Because of the characteristic black-and-white markings of many penguins, and their upright stature, they are often compared to little men in evening clothes.

Glosses of some other words in this story: A *zoo* (short for *zoological garden*) is a garden or park where wild animals are kept for exhibition. *In a hurry* = feeling a pressure of time; wanting to do something as fast as possible. *All of a sudden* = suddenly. A *flat tire* is an automobile (or truck, bicycle, etc.) tire that has no air in it. *Flags down* = signals, by waving the hand, etc., for someone to stop. *Look* is a word used to gain someone's attention to listen to an explanation. *Gotta* is a "phonetic" rendering of *got to*, used to represent the informal or colloquial nature of the speech; *I've got to = I have to*. *Get these...to the zoo* = see that they are transported to the zoo. *Guy* = man, fellow (informal). *Change* is money left from the ten dollars (after buying tickets for all the penguins to enter the zoo). The surprise ending depends on the two different ways of understanding *take the penguins to the zoo*. One often takes someone (a friend, one's children, etc.) to the zoo (the movies, a play, etc.) as a guest, to be a spectator; obviously, however, the man with station wagon was delivering the penguins to the zoo as animals for exhibition.

[12] Editor's Note: We can hope that this statement is true. It may be a bit sanguine, however, in view of other possible (and subtler) cultural differences.

Eliciting jokes

Until now, we have been moving, from the student's point of view, from the unknown to the known. The jokes he has been hearing in class are invariably new to him. It is now appropriate to change pedagogical direction, and to start with material that is already known to the student—that is, his own jokes. The outline I have been suggesting—starting with riddles and joking questions, proceeding to narrative jokes, and now, eliciting jokes—is schematic. In fact, as you tell jokes for comprehension, you are likely to find that there are one or more natural joke-tellers among your students, who will counter with jokes of their own before you elicit them. Often a friendly spirit of competition develops among the students.

Let's say a student is ready to tell the class a joke. He may prefer to tell you the joke first, outside of class, so that he can work out the difficulties he will encounter. You can help him with vocabulary that he needs to tell it, you can help him with the beginning pattern of the joke, and you can help supply any dialogue he needs. These are valuable lessons for the student, because whatever he is learning is material that he will be using almost immediately to communicate his own ideas. The student can then tell his joke to the whole class with some confidence. If the student is brave, and willing to tell the joke to the whole class without preparation, this is even more valuable.

CONCLUSION

I hope I have made a strong case for using jokes in our classes. We can see that jokes can be used effectively for the conventional purposes of teaching and reinforcing grammar, vocabulary, and speech behavior. But even more importantly—and this is where jokes fill a unique niche in the ESL class—the very act of telling jokes creates a genuine speech event, in which students and teacher are natural participants. Few of us would knowingly want to waste this opportunity.

REFERENCES

Di Pietro, Robert. 1976. Contrasting patterns of language use: a conversational approach. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 33,* 1: 49–61.

Monnot, M. and J. Kite. 1974. Pun and games: paranomasia in the ESL classoom. *TESOL Quarterly, 8,* 1: 65–71.

Paulston, C.B., et. al. 1975. *Developing communicative competence: role-plays in English as a second language*. Pittsburgh: University Center for International Studies.

Sacks, Harvey. 1974. An analysis of the course of a joke's telling in conversation. In *Explorations in the ethnography of speaking,* ed. R. Bauman and J. Sherzer. London: Cambridge University Press. □

Learning to Listen continued from page 7

> it to practice your resumé aloud. When you think you have perfected your oral presentation to the point of being able to give it with a minimum of error, notify your teacher. Remember, though, you will not read your resumé but give it orally using your outline as notes."

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I feel I must add that this paper deals with a skill and a level of its acquisition about which little is known. In the words of Marty (1978), "it is one of the most baffling of all teaching problems." Nevertheless, we cannot escape the common observation that seems to tell us that students learn what they practice, and the more time they spend at it the more adept they become. If reading is emphasized in the advanced class, it will be the skill in which students become most proficient. By the same token, if listening comprehension is overlooked, or given only minimal attention, it will be an area in which learners are deficient.

The message of this article is that we should increase the priority of listening comprehension, especially in the advanced class. That means that we must provide extensive—even massive—exposure, coupled with a repertoire of facilitating techniques. These are things that have generally received too little attention in the training of advanced students.

REFERENCES

Carroll, John B. 1973. Some suggestions from a psycholinguist. *TESOL Quarterly, 7,* pp. 355–67.

Godfrey, Dennis. 1977. Listening instruction and practice for advanced second language students. *Language Learning, 27,* pp. 109–22.

Ingram, Frank, et al. 1975. A program for listening comprehension. *Slavic and East European Journal, 19,* pp. 1–10.

Johnson, R. L. and H. L. Friedman. 1971. Some temporal factors in the listening behavior of second language students. In *The psychology of second language learning: papers from the Second International Congress of Applied Linguistics. Cambridge, 8–12 September 1969,* ed. Paul Pimsleur. Cambridge: University Press.

Lado, Robert. 1965. Memory span as a factor in second language learning. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 3,* 2, pp. 123–29.

Lord, R. 1974. Learning vocabulary. *International Review of Applied Linguistics, 12,* 3.

Marty, Fernand. 1968. *Teaching French*. Roanoke, Va.: Audio-Visual Publications, p. 71.

Miller, George. 1956. The magical number seven, plus or minus two: some limits on our capacity for processing information. *The Psychological Review, 63,* pp. 81–97.

Mueller, Theodore. 1974. Another look at how to teach listening and reading comprehension. *Modern Language Journal, 18,* pp. 19–23.

Rivers, Wilga M. 1971. Linguistics and psychological factors in speech perception and their implication for teaching materials. In *The psychology of second language learning: papers from the second International Congress of Applied Linguistics, Cambridge, 8–12 September 1969,* eds. Paul Pimsleur and Terrence Quinn. Cambridge: University Press.

Sherrow, Renee. 1971. Suggestions for teaching listening comprehension skills. *French Review, 44,* p. 738.

Twaddell, W. Freeman. 1972. Linguists and language teachers. In *Readings on English as a second language,* ed. K. Croft, p. 272. Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers.

———— 1973. Vocabulary expansion in the TESOL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 7,* pp. 61–78.

Wu Yi So. 1974. A new language laboratory for advanced students. *TESOL Quarterly, 8,* pp. 293–304. □

Structured Experiences for Group Activity

JIM BRIMS
The British Council
Munich, Germany

Jim Brims teaches English with the British Council in Munich. He has a degree in English literature and a diploma in personnel management, as well as a certificate in the teaching of EFL. His work is mainly involved with the teaching of English to managerial and professional people. Mr. Brims has had various role-playing activities and simulations published by Management Games, Ltd., in England.

The "structured experiences" described in this article are designed to help the student develop self-awareness by obtaining feedback about his behavior from other members of a group.[1] These experiences involve various kinds of situations in which the student has to cooperate, compete, disagree, communicate, or even fantasize with others, and then publish his observations of the activity and his reactions to it. The relevance of such activities to the teaching of English becomes clear within the context of the functional approach that has received increasing attention during the past few years. I have sought to gain maximum usefulness from these exercises by putting a kind of pressure on the student that will develop his personal relationship with the language and his natural ability to use it, rather than limiting his verbal communication to the mere exchanging of English phrases or communicative utterances in the hope that learning will result. In order to transfer his learning to the "real world," the student must be able to develop in the target language ideas and attitudes that are new and interesting to him. I feel, therefore, that these activities are more than just language practice; they require the student to apply the language and to assume a certain responsibility for what he is saying.

CULTURE GAME

Every culture differs from other cultures in social behavior. In some cases the differences between two cultures are so great that the customs of one may seem bizarre to people from the other culture. However, it is customary for a visitor to attempt to understand, and even imitate, the customs of a group one is visiting. The following "culture game" is based on this fact.

Instructions:

1. As a group, decide on the cultural values and customary forms of behavior that your group is to express; then practice these among yourselves. Your instructor will provide you with ideas if you need them. These cultural practices should have a certain logic to them, and they should not be so obvious that an observer could guess them immediately. Here are a few examples:

   a. Jackets are exchanged at exactly three-minute intervals.
   b. Before approaching another member of the group, one must consult an elder.

---

[1] All the situations except "culture game" are based on activities described in J. William Pfeiffer and John E. Jones, eds., *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training*, Vols. 1–6. These are available from: University Associates, 7596 Eads Avenue, La Jolla, California 92037. My thanks are due to my wife, Nancy Osmond, Mario Rinvolucri, Lou Spaventa, and Carlos Maeztu for introducing the ideas to me. Various role-playing activities and simulations by the author are available from Management Games, Ltd., 11 Woburn Street, Ampthill, Bedford MK45 2HP, England.

c. Playing cards must be exchanged at the beginning and end of visits.

2. When you have established the cultural practices for your group, think of some penalties that might be imposed for nonobservance of these rules. For example:

a. Failure to exchange jackets results in confiscation of the person's own jacket.

b. Failure to consult the elder before approaching a group member results in ejection from the group.

3. After the preparations in (1) and (2) have been completed, one or two observers from group A are sent to group B to observe the customs of that group. At the same time observers are sent from group B to group A. Both sets of observers then report back to their own groups on what they have observed.

4. The nonobservers from each group now visit the other group, using the information they have obtained from the observers to try to integrate with the group they are visiting.

As an alternative, some members of the class can be asked to act as observers throughout the exercise.

This activity should not take longer than half an hour at the most, and it should lead up to a general discussion of cultural differences and, in particular, to feedback and analysis of the behavior of the members of each group—what behavior they adopted and why, what they learned, and why certain people chose to act in certain ways. This is clearly the most important part of the activity, and it can be conducted with an optional amount of leadership from the teacher. One way to do this would be to ask each student to write down as many adjectives as he can think of about the behavior of *one* member of the class. Each then reads the adjectives he has written, and the other members of the group have to guess who is being referred to, giving reasons for their conclusions. The person described can then give his reasons for agreeing or disagreeing, and these can also be discussed.

SPY

For this activity, the teacher must build a model out of children's building blocks or Lego bricks. The model should be complex enough to be fairly difficult for the class to describe, according to their level of proficiency in English.

The procedure is as follows: (1) Each student is given a copy of the information and instruction sheet, including the special instructions for spies. It is important that none of the special instructions for spies be marked "You are a spy." There are no spies in any of the groups. (2) For each group (usually five or six people) an observer is appointed, who not only observes that the rules are obeyed, but also makes notes on the group's behavior. (3) The groups must then build the model within the given time limit, in competition with each other.

During the exercise, and in the ensuing discussion, the students must be made aware of the effect that the particular language they used had on the group's activity. This is partly the responsibility of the observers, but mainly of the teacher, who can probably best do this by tape-recording all or part of the activity, and calling the students' attention to the way they used the language, as well as the mistakes they made. A useful extra is for the teacher to prepare a list of vocabulary and phrases to help the students describe the model.

Instruction Sheet[2]

Aims:

To analyze the reactions of people within a group to each other, while working on a constructive activity.

Instructions:

Behind the screen is a model that the instructor has built. The task of the group is to construct a model exactly like it, using the blocks that the instructor will provide. When the group has understood all the instructions, they should ask the instructor for the blocks.

Rules:

1. Only one member of the group may go to look at the instructor's model at one time.

2. For each visit to the model, the observer will add one minute to the group's total time in completing the model.

3. The group may send any number of its members to look at the model, but one minute will be added for each one who does so.

4. A member of the team may look at the model for as long as he wants to, but only from one side for each visit.

5. You will be given fourteen blocks to construct the model, only twelve of which are necessary.

6. When the group thinks that the model is perfectly correct, it should tell the instructor, who will check it.

7. Each time the instructor is asked to check the model, he will ask the observer to add one minute to the time for each mistake.

8. The maximum time allowed to complete the model is thirty minutes. When one group has completed the model correctly, the game is over. However, the group that finishes first is not necessarily the winner, as the models of the other group(s) will also be checked.

9. As always, English is the medium of communication. Speaking any other language or translating the instructions is not allowed.

---

[2] Reprinted from J.W. Pfeiffer and J.E. Jones (eds.), *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training*, Vol. 6 (La Jolla, Calif.: University Associates). Used with permission.

Special Instructions for Spies

A cross (x) in one of the boxes will tell you whether or not you are a spy.

You are a spy. ☐

You are *not* a spy. ☐

If you are a spy, you should do everything you can to hinder the work of your group. For example, you can spend a lot of time at the model, make a lot of visits to the model, give the group the wrong information, encourage the others to speak their native language, etc. You must *not* inform the members of your group whether you are a spy or not.

If one person in a group thinks that another is a spy, he can accuse that person of spying. The rest of the group will vote, and if *everybody* agrees, the spy can be left out of the rest of the work by the group.

As these activities proceed, the group should develop an increased awareness of the effect that their way of expressing themselves has on each other. The teacher's role is to help with language problems, possibly to provide input, and to lead the discussions. The pressure is, however, obviously very much on the student to express himself and to defend his position, as well as to observe and correct others.

LEMONS

This activity provides intensive language practice with the added incentive that the student is able to see the results of his ability to express himself.

The class is divided into pairs, and each student is given a lemon. They are asked to sit back to back so they cannot see each other's lemons. Each student is then asked to describe his lemon to his partner for one minute. At this stage there will almost inevitably be cries for help, and the teacher can assist by writing useful vocabulary and expressions on the board. This is a good opportunity for the teacher to lead the students toward using expressions such as *It looks like..., It feels like...*, or even *It smells like....* (Lemons smell surprisingly different!) The students are then asked to close their eyes and repeat the process, this time without a time limit. Then the students exchange lemons, and each student describes his partner's lemon back to him, the partner correcting as he goes along. At the end, all lemons are collected in a box, and each student tries to find his partner's lemon. The sense of confidence in being able to find the correct lemon—as usually happens—is always a pleasing experience, designed to increase the student's confidence in his partner and in his own language ability.[3]

SYNERGY

This activity shows the superior accuracy of deductions made by a group over those made by an individual working by himself.

Each student is given a copy of the synergy worksheet and is asked to rank the letters in the order of (his estimate of) their frequency of occurrence in English. The teacher then collects the sheets, and he (or one of the students) calculates the average ranking for each letter by adding all the numbers for each letter and dividing by the number of papers. The method of calculating the accuracy of the rankings is to add together the differences between the estimated rankings and the correct rankings. All differences are counted as positive.

Now the class meets as a group and discusses how they think the letters should be ranked. They must agree, as nearly as possible, on the correct order. When the group has finished, the teacher writes the group result next to the average of individual rankings, on an overhead projector or on the board, and finally he writes the correct order.[4] If the group result is closer to the actual rankings than the individual estimates are, synergy within the group (achievement by combined action not possible by individual action) has been demonstrated.

Synergy Worksheet

Instructions:

Below is a list of the fifteen letters that occur most often in written English. Look at the letters and decide which ones you think occur most often. Then rank the letters in the order in which you think they occur. For example, if you think that N is the letter that occurs most frequently, put the number 1 next to it. Put the number 2 next to the letter that you think occurs the second most frequently, and so on down to fifteen, which is your estimate of the letter of this group that is used the least frequently in written English.

____ N
____ T
____ S
____ D
____ U
____ L
____ E
____ C
____ F
____ I
____ R
____ H
____ M
____ A
____ O

Synergy Group Worksheet

Instructions:

Now, as a group, you must come to a consensus as to which rank is to be assigned to each letter. The following rules must be observed:

1. An individual may not change any of the answers on his worksheet as a result of the group decision.

continued on page 19

---

[3] Reprinted from J.W. Pfeiffer and J.E. Jones (eds.), *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training*. Vol. 3 (La Jolla, Calif.: University Associates). Used with permission.

[4] The correct order of the letters is:

1. E
2. T
3. A
4. O
5. N
6. R
7. I
8. S
9. H
10. D
11. L
12. F
13. C
14. M
15. U

(Based on information in A.E. Karbowiak and R.M. Huey, *Information, Computers, Machines, and Man*. New York: John Wiley, 1971.)

Hearing and Comprehending

WILGA M. RIVERS
Harvard University

Wilga M. Rivers is professor of romance languages and coordinator of language instruction at Harvard University. She has also taught at the University of Illinois, Columbia University, Northern Illinois University, and Monash University (Australia), and has lectured in many countries to teachers of English and other languages. Dr. Rivers has contributed numerous articles to professional journals and has written a number of books on language teaching, the most recent being *A Practical Guide to the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages* (with Mary S. Temperley: Oxford University Press, 1977).

"*What was that? I didn't quite catch it.*" This polite interruption demonstrates the difference between *hearing* and *comprehending*. In teaching students listening comprehension in a foreign language, we must realize that one is possible without the other. The listener in this case probably heard the actual sounds of the utterance quite clearly and even distinguished words. Linguistic information (identification of words and syntactic structures) was not necessarily the problem, but for some reason the listener was not able to construct a significance for them that seemed to fit the situational context. (The listener may also have preferred not to comprehend because the message extracted was displeasing. The remark with which this article begins is, in this case, part of a conversational gambit through which the listener allows the speaker the opportunity to reconstruct the original message in a way that is more acceptable.)

Listening is not a passive skill, nor even, as has been traditionally believed, a receptive skill. *Listening is a creative skill.* In order to comprehend the sounds falling on our ears, we take the raw material of words, arrangements of words, and the rise and fall of the voice, and from this material we create a significance. There is *meaning* in the linguistic arrangement the speaker has produced—the speaker's meaning—but *significance is in the mind of the listener*. That is why we can say of a person whose language we understand perfectly, "I find her quite incomprehensible." Even more difficulties of this kind arise with a language and culture with which we are only slowly becoming familiar.

Significance, which comes from the listener's side, is dependent on three factors.

1. There is the *linguistic information* that is extracted from the sound signal—that is, what listeners perceive aurally of sounds, words, and their arrangements in utterances. What the listener perceives is not necessarily what was emitted by the speaker, but once the listener has selected a sequence from the original signal, the rest of the sound signal slips from auditory memory and is no longer directly accessible for the reconstruction of an alternative message.
2. The *situational context* of the utterance affects what listeners perceive to be the relationship between what they have heard and what has been said, and also their expectations of what will follow.
3. The comprehended message is dependent on what the listener perceives to be the *intentions of the speaker*.

Looking at this act of comprehension from the point of view of the listener, we may invert the order of these factors in real-life functioning and say that what we perceive to be the intentions of the speaker in a certain context determines what we select and retain from the sound signal as the significance of the message. This is why "You cunning fox!" can be perceived as a compliment in one situation and as a deadly insult in another. Unfortunately, in teaching situations, it is often only the first factor, the linguistic content of the utterance (which in real life is the last to be apprehended) that receives much attention. Consequently, many students hear but do not comprehend.

Significance begins, then, with interpretation of the speaker's intentions. This interpretation is dependent on what we know about the speaker or persons like the speaker (Parisian cab drivers, Texas oilmen); the expectations the situation (as a continuum) and previous utterances have aroused; and the nonverbal behavior of the speaker (deep breathing, flushed appearance, shrug of the shoulder, faraway look, and so on). Information about the speaker's intentions, beliefs, and attitude toward the listener is called *interactional content,* and experimentation has shown that we recall much more accurately the actual words spoken when interactional content is high. In other words, the interpretation we have stored parallels much more closely what was actually said in this case, because we have more insight into the meaning the speaker intended to encode.[1]

The more we already know, the less auditory information we need to create a significance from phonic material. Hence we can "understand" distorted, noisy signals, defective signals, or even an uncompleted signal if our expectations in the situation are sufficiently accurate. This shows we are creating a message, not receiving one, since we cannot "receive" what was never uttered. Furthermore, we do not register all we hear. If we did, our language processing system and our memory would quickly become overloaded, and we would not be able to continue to function as comprehenders. In comprehending oral messages, then, we are not just extracting linguistic information, but we are selecting and matching what we have selected against probable messages that we are anticipating.

Recognition vocabulary

Schlesinger suggests that in listening we may not bother to process most of the syntax: that, for the most part, we move from apprehension of semantic elements directly, by matching, to the cognitive (or comprehension) level. He considers that we resort to the analysis of the syntax of the sound signal only when there is ambiguity or when, for some reason, we have not extracted a clear meaning from the signal.[2] If this is so, foreign-language learners need a wide recognition vocabulary for rapid comprehension, rather than a sophisticated knowledge of syntax. Most of the latter, it seems, will not be needed for this task, because if we took the time to process each message in detail we would never be able to keep up with the speaker.

To develop facility in comprehending spoken messages, students need much practice in recognizing aurally vocabulary they may have been learning mostly in written form. Here games, competitions, and other activities that require quick word recognition, grouping, and matching are useful. Where this is appropriate for the language being learned, students should have much practice in recognizing cognates of words in their own language. This is not always as easy as we think, since most cognates have assumed very effective linguistic disguises. Students also need to acquire rapidity in "topping and tailing"—that is, in extracting the meaning of apparently unknown words by word-breakdown methods. They need practice in rapid recognition of prefixes and suffixes and what these contribute to the meanings of words. They need practice in aurally associating word stems with related forms that may have different vowel or consonant sounds (for example, *poor, poorly, poverty, impoverished, poorer, poorness; do, undo, redo, undone, redid*). They need to associate words in semantic fields, so that recognition of one taps the conceptual network[3] and makes associated words more readily available. This process is facilitated if vocabulary is acquired in a matrix of relevant material and there are frequent exercises in word associations.

The "click of comprehension" presumes knowledge of "the script"

Comprehension also requires a deep knowledge of the theme of the speaker's discourse, because much of comprehension is drawing inferences. A great deal of what we "comprehend" is not in the linguistic information we are receiving at all. Researchers in artificial intelligence have become very much aware of this as they try to program computers to comprehend human language.

We may hear "He went into a restaurant. After the salad he felt better." Comprehension of this sequence requires us to know that one sits down at a table in a restaurant; a waiter brings a menu; one orders; the waiter goes away to order the main dish; in America, the waiter frequently brings a salad for you to eat while you are waiting for the main dish to be prepared. None of this information is in the linguistic signal. Schank and Abelson have called the information we possess as a background to what we comprehend a "*script*"; and they work even more detailed scripts than this into the information bank of their computer programs for experiments on comprehension.[4] Because we possess this type of information about real life we are able to make inferences we would not otherwise be able to make. In an American setting, then, "after the salad" allows us to infer that the person to whom the speaker is referring has already ordered a meal. "The possession of a script allows a speaker to leave many things unsaid with the certainty that the listener will fill in such gaps by default."[5]

---

[1] J. M. Keenan, B. MacWhinney, and D. Mayhew, "Pragmatics in Memory: A Study of Natural Conversation," *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 16 (1977): 549–60.

[2] I. M. Schlesinger, *Production and Comprehension of Utterances* (Hillsdale, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977).

[3] The operation of semantic or conceptual networks is discussed in W. M. Rivers and B. S. Melvin, "If Only I Could Remember It All! Facts and Fiction about Memory in Language Learning," in M. Burt, H. Dulay, and M. Finocchiaro, *Viewpoints on English as a Second Language* (New York: Regents Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 166–67.

[4] R. C. Schank and R. P. Abelson, "Scripts, Plans, and Knowledge," in P. N. Johnson-Laird and P. C. Wason, eds., *Thinking. Readings in Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 421–32.

Clearly, this is one of the obstacles to comprehension when we listen to a message in a foreign language. If the ways of life, customs, and values of the speakers of the language are very different from our own (or if the area is very specialized—for example, genetic engineering), we do not possess the same "script" as the speaker. As a result we do not understand, because we do not possess sufficient information to make the necessary inferences.

Similar to the notion of a "script" is what other psychologists call our "currently activated knowledge of the world." Note that, even if we possess the knowledge of the world we require for comprehension of certain utterances, this is of no use to us unless it is activated as we listen—in other words, unless we have picked up cues that direct our attention in a certain direction. In the usual social interaction, this orientation is supplied by the situation in its broadest sense. Where such cues are lacking, existing knowledge can be activated through titles or statements of topic. Newscasters on radio give headline statements before they give details of the news. In conversation, we do this with *topic focus*. We say "About your cousin's trip, it's raining in Haiti."

From the teaching point of view, we activate prior knowledge through *preparatory discussion* of related topics and by making sure key words are known and have been recently brought to conscious awareness. To do this, we do not need to place before the student a list of such words, but the well-prepared teacher with an integrated plan of activities will see that such key words have been used in some recent discussion before they appear in listening material. An unfamiliar key word must not appear near the beginning of a listening passage, since this can cause early confusion for the listener. It must be set in a context where its meaning becomes clear.

In natural communication, part of the "script" is what we know about the speaker and the situation and what we are absorbing from nonverbal behavior. With a foreign-language listening experience on tape or cassette, we often know nothing of the speaker; the situation and its antecedents are not clearly specified; and we cannot see the nonverbal behavior of the speaker. The comprehension of the utterance is thus made much more difficult for the student. To supply students with background for listening material, we should give them, before they begin listening, explanations as to who is speaking to whom, the nature of their relationship, and their expectations in the situation. With the wider availability of videotapes and films, students will have the additional aid to comprehension that a natural situation provides: a chance to observe movements and expressions.

Inferences

In extracting significance we have to make many *bridging inferences* which help us to understand the logic of the sequence. For this we need to be able to recognize logical connectives and relational words (*because of, since, therefore, not necessarily*) and words that establish temporal order (*before, after, at the same time*). Exercises should be developed to help students recognize these types of expressions rapidly in their aural form and draw inferences from their use.

When we understand what elements make for easy or difficult comprehension, we will see that success is not entirely dependent on knowledge of actual details of the language. We must help the students to bring into play factors that are operating in native-language comprehension: toleration for vagueness and ambiguity as the message unfolds; deduction from context, situation, and speaker in the situation; drawing inferences and inferring meaning of unfamiliar words; bridging and drawing conclusions not actually in the linguistic input.

False recognition memory

We store in memory our *interpretation* of what we have heard, and then we usually cannot distinguish this from what we actually did hear. This has implications for the testing of listening comprehension by multiple-choice items and true-false statements. In these types of tests, students who did not comprehend will select statements that were never uttered and yet be certain they heard them. Multiple-choice and true-false items, well designed, can be more than hit-or-miss elimination items; they can pinpoint genuine misinterpretations on the part of the students. They must, however, be carefully thought out to provide plausible alternatives to the correct interpretation of the speaker's intention.

Attention focus

If we begin by misinterpreting the significance of what we hear, we will continue to draw inferences from the wrong cues and finally develop a quite erroneous interpretation of the whole. Since we will have selected what to retain and interrelate, we will no longer have access to the auditory image of the material we have rejected, and thus we will be unable to reconstruct an alternative significance.

For this reason, several sections of discourse (with ample context) are better for testing aural comprehension than one long discourse. In this way, an initial error will not ruin the whole test for the student, as may happen with one lengthy passage. The student has a new opportunity with each section of the test. Several passages constitute a better test also because they tap several different semantic areas, and this provides a much fairer assessment of the student's real knowledge of the language.

---

[5] "Introduction to Inference and Comprehension," in Johnson-Laird and Wason, eds. (1977), p. 353.

Levels of difficulty

Carroll has pointed out that listening-comprehension ability tests correlate highly with intelligence tests, because both of them test “processes of inference, deduction, and problem solving that often accompany the reception of language.”[6] For this reason, it is difficult to decide on levels of difficulty of listening-comprehension material, since this is not purely a matter of the difficulty level of the language material for the student (breadth of vocabulary, complications of syntax, length of segments, and so on). The result of a listening-comprehension test is often all or nothing—the student perceived the significance or did not. This does not necessarily mean that the student did not understand the words or grammatical structures or would not have understood another passage of comparable length. Here we have another strong reason for testing students through a variety of passages in any one test, so that a passage that was found to contain unanticipated difficulties for a number of students may be dropped from the final score.

Testing the results of listening

In testing listening comprehension, we are not testing some vague entity called “the listening skill.” We are testing comprehension of significance that has resulted from the listening experience (not “knowledge of the language” in itself). Students need knowledge of the language to comprehend, but comprehension goes far beyond this.

Rather than trying to give students practice in, and testing them on, something we call “listening comprehension,” we should be testing “learning (comprehending) by listening,”[7] listening which requires the listener to act in some way,[8] and the results of listening.

This approach means that the most effective practice in listening will be in a purposeful context:

- Students listen for instructions that must be carried out in some practical way.
- Students listen to subject matter that must be learned and which itself will be tested (thus testing how well it was comprehended).
- Students listen as part of a global act of communication, as part of a conversational interchange, which can only continue when there *is* comprehension.
- Students take part in a continuing activity (for example, a series of episodes of a soap opera they are creating) where successive groups of students can perform their part of the activity only if they comprehended the preceding segment.

It is evident, then, that we must understand the essential processes in comprehending aural material[9] and the possible pitfalls for the students before we can prepare useful materials for student practice in this area and before we can construct valid listening tests. An analysis of the factors that make for easy or difficult comprehension reveals that comprehension is not totally dependent on what foreign-language material they have learned. The students' ability to draw inferences and construct meaning in situations in the native language will affect their facility in performing these same operations in a new language. Those who prove to have the most aptitude in this area will not always be those who perform best in writing or even in oral production. Students should receive full credit for their skill in this quite different area. The importance of aural comprehension cannot be overestimated, since *without comprehension there is no communication*. □

---

[6] J. B. Carroll, “Defining Language Comprehension: Some Speculations,” in J. B. Carroll and R. O. Freedle, eds., *Language Comprehension and the Acquisition of Knowledge* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972), p. 3.

[7] T. G. Sticht, “Learning by Listening,” in Carroll and Freedle, eds. (1972), p. 294.

[8] G. A. Miller and P. N. Johnson-Laird, *Language and Perception* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 703.

[9] Further information on research in the perception of speech and its implication for language teaching will be found in Wilga M. Rivers, *Teaching Foreign-Language Skills*. Rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) and in W. M. Rivers and M. S. Temperley, *Practical Guide to the Teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), Chapter 3.

Structured Experiences for Group Activity

continued from page 15

2. One member of the group is to record the group's decisions on the group's worksheet.

3. The whole group must substantially agree on the ranking of each letter.

4. Finding averages, majority voting, and compromises are to be avoided.

5. As always, English is the medium of communication.[5]

CONCLUSION

All of the activities I have described can be adapted by the teacher to his own style of teaching, can be added to, subtracted from to suit the level of the class, or can be taken wholesale and so used. They obviously call for a greater degree of emotional commitment from the teacher and the student than is usual in language classes. It is exactly this emotional commitment that I believe develops the student's awareness of the language he uses, makes him realize that English is different from his own language, and makes him conscious of the social role of language. □

---

[5] Reprinted from J.W. Pfeiffer and J.E. Jones (eds.), *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training*, Vol. 5 (La Jolla, Calif.: University Associates). Used with permission.

TEN SHAGGY DOG STORIES

(as on the recorded disc)

THE INTELLIGENT DOG

I'm going to tell you about an extraordinary thing that happened the other day. The day before yesterday, about eight o'clock at night, a young woman approached the box office[1] of the best movie theater in the city. She had with her an enormous dog with a beautifully groomed coat.[2] She bought two tickets and went toward the door, followed by her dog. The manager of the theater spoke to her, saying:

Manager: I'm sorry, miss, but dogs aren't allowed in this theater.

Girl: But I have a ticket for him.

M: I'm very sorry, but animals aren't permitted.

G: You don't understand. This is a special case. My dog is so well trained and so intelligent that he's almost human.

M: I see that you have an exceptional animal, but...

G: I promise you that if there is any problem we'll leave the theater immediately. I assure you that this dog isn't like any other dog you've ever seen.

M: Well,[3] all right. I'll let you go in, since the theater is almost empty tonight. Nevertheless, your dog will have to behave himself, or you will have to leave.

Several hours go by, and now the people are leaving the theater. The manager sees the girl with her dog.

M: I congratulate you. You were right; your dog behaved very well. I've been watching him, and it's amazing how quiet he was.

G: I told you that he's well trained and very intelligent.

M: He certainly is. It even seemed as if he was enjoying the movie.

G: Oh, he did enjoy it. He liked the film very much. However, he liked the book much better.[4]

THE MOST AMAZING ACT IN THE WORLD

Peter: Hello, John. What are you doing here?

John: Hi, Peter. I've come to see Mr. Brilliant.

P: Mr. Brilliant, the famous theater agent?[5]

J: The same.[6]

P: Then you've finally perfected[7] your act?

J: Yep,[8] after two years of hard work, at last I have done it! I've finally succeeded in training an ant.

P: So you've trained an ant! Amazing!

---

1. **box office:** a small office (in a theater, stadium, etc.) where tickets of admission are sold. 2. **beautifully groomed coat:** the hair or fur of an animal that has been carefully cleaned and brushed. 3. **Well:** a word used to introduce a remark, resume the thread of a conversation, or simply gain time to collect one's thoughts. 4. **He liked the film...he liked the book much better**. When a person has seen a moving picture that has been made from a popular book (having read the book earlier), he often comments, "I liked the movie, but I liked the book better." 5. **theater agent:** a person who acts as a representative for actors and other performers in obtaining sponsors and occasions for their performances. 6. **The same:** Yes, that very person. 7. **perfected:** Notice that the verb *perfect* is stressed on the second syllable, unlike the adjective, which has a first-syllable stress. 8. **Yep:** yes (slang).

J: I have worked sixteen hours a day on this act. But Little Andy is sensational . . .

P: Yes, it's worth all that hard work to produce an act like that, my friend! Just think! You're the first man in history who has trained an ant.

J: I'm sure Little Andy will soon be known throughout the whole world.

P: You're a lucky man. You'll be famous. You'll be rich.

Secretary: Excuse me, Mr. Miller, you can go into Mr. Brilliant's office now.

J: Thank you. (*Pause*.) Oh, miss, Mr. Brilliant isn't at his desk.

S: He's in the other office. He'll be back right away.

J: Look, Peter, this is perfect! I'll get Little Andy's act ready while Mr. Brilliant is out of the room.

P: Good idea! He'll be surprised when he sits down at his desk and sees your ant doing his act.

J: O.K. Little Andy is ready to begin. First, he'll stand up on his front feet on top of this little ball.

P: Amazing! Can he really do that?

J: Sure. And that's not all! He waves a flag with his hind feet at the same time.

P: Incredible! But...I can't see what he's doing.

J: Oh...I almost forgot the magnifying glass. With the magnifying glass you can see the whole thing and really enjoy his act.

P: O.K. Where's the glass?

J: Let's see...it was here in the suitcase...

Brilliant: Good afternoon, gentlemen. What can I do for you?

J: Good afternoon, Mr. Brilliant. I'm John Miller. I'm here to show you the most amazing act in the world!

B: Marvelous! Show me what you have.

J: All right! Take this magnifying glass...

B: Oh!...uh...there's an ant on my desk...I'll get him[9]...(*Slap!*)

J: Ohhh! Nooooo!...

B: There! I got it.[10] And now, my friend, let's see this amazing act!

J: Ooohhhhh!

THE UNKNOWN GIRL

Henry: Hello, Charles.

Charles: How goes it, Henry?[11]

H: Fine, thanks. But what's the matter with you?

C: Oh, nothing. I was thinking about what happened to me at Peter's party.

H: Oh? What happened?

C: I met the most beautiful girl in the world.

H: Really? What's her name?

C: Her name? Her name? I wish I knew!

H: Do you mean to tell me that you don't even know her name? How can that be?

C: I'm still not sure how it happened. You know how shy I am with girls. I guess I got flustered[12] when I was with her.

H: Yes, I know you're shy when you're with girls.

C: Well, I finally managed[13] to get up enough nerve[14] to ask her to dance. But I couldn't say a word to her. Nothing came to me.[15]

H: Man! I would have thought of *something* to talk about!

C: When the music stopped, I was able to say a few words to her.

H: But you didn't ask her her name?

C: I tried to....Listen to what we said to each other, and then maybe you can understand why I didn't get her name.[16]

C: Thank you very much for the dance.

Girl: You're welcome. I enjoyed it very much, but now I must go.

C: Oh...uh...miss!

G: Yes?

C: Can I call you tomorrow?

G: Of course, if you want to.

C: Will you give me your phone number?

G: You can find it in the telephone directory.

C: Oh, of course, How stupid I am!

G: Now I must go.

C: But...uh...uh...I don't know your name.

G: You can find my name in the telephone directory too! Goodbye!

THE HUNTER AND THE LION

When I was in Africa last year, a man told me about an incredible experience. The conversation went something like this:

Hunter: The other day the most extraordinary thing happened to me!

Tourist: I suppose that you professional hunters have interesting experiences every day.

---

[9] **I'll get him:** I'll catch (or trap or kill) him (in this case, kill the ant). [10] **I got it:** I killed the ant. [11] **How goes it?:** An informal greeting, meaning "How is everything with you?" [12] **got flustered:** became nervous and confused. [13] **managed:** was able (by making an effort). [14] **get up enough nerve:** become bold enough. [15] **nothing came to me:** nothing occurred to me; nothing came into my mind to say. [16] **get her name:** learn her name; find out what her name was.

H: I'm not a professional hunter; quite the contrary. My sport is to shoot at fixed[17] targets, a great distance away.

T: That seems like the best way to learn to shoot well.

H: But it didn't turn out to be.[18] I've decided to quit hunting animals and go back to my own country.

T: Oh, why?

H: I'll tell you. The other morning[19] I was walking through the jungle, and suddenly the blood froze in my veins![20]

T: What happened?

H: Less than three meters away, hidden in the grass, was an enormous lion. With a terrible roar, he leaped toward me with a great bound.[21]

T: No!

H: I kneeled down, aimed my rifle, and shot—boom!—but as I had no practice in shooting at moving targets at such a short distance, I didn't hit him.

T: And you're still alive!

H: Only by the grace of God. You see, the lion made such a long leap that he went flying over my head, and landed some five meters away from me.

T: What happened then?

H: Well, the other hunters came running, and the lion quickly disappeared into the jungle.

T: And this experience cured you of hunting?[22]

H: No. It was what I saw later that made me decide to quit hunting.

T: And what was that?

H: Listen…I returned to the camp and immediately began to practice shooting at moving targets at close range,[23] in order to be able to kill a lion if another one should attack me. One of the boys tossed tin cans into the air and I shot at them…

T: Yes, yes, go on.

H: It was going well, and I was beginning to get my confidence back. I believed that I already had the advantage over the lion, and I was anxious to meet him again.

T: Then what happened that made you decide to quit hunting?

H: Well, I'll tell you. As soon as I stopped practicing, I heard strange sounds coming from the jungle. I heard a pum, pum, pum…

T: What was it?

H: I looked up over the fence, and there at the edge of the jungle was the same lion.

T: And just seeing it was enough to make you decide to go back to your own country?

H: No. It was what the lion was doing that made me decide!

T: What was that?

H: Believe it or not, the lion was practicing short jumps!

THE PRACTICAL COUNTRY BOY

It's a cold winter afternoon. A car comes along a little-traveled[24] road. The motor is not working well, and it finally stalls.[25] The automobile slows down until it stops. Two men get out, and they begin to talk:

1: What happened?

2: I guess we ran out of[26] gasoline.

1: What awful[27] luck! It's…it's cold here. Look, there's nothing in sight.[28] We can't make a phone call. And there's no traffic on this highway.

2: We'll have to walk to the nearest town and find a gas station.[29] Let's go on ahead, because the last town we passed was more than a hundred kilometers[30] back.

1: But how do we know there's a town any closer in this direction?

2: Yeah,[31] you're right! We don't have any idea how long it will take us to get to the nearest town. And I don't have a map of this area.

1: Well, the best thing to do is walk to the nearest town—if it isn't too far. On the other hand, if it's more than two hours away, it would be better to stay with the car.

2: Wait a minute! Here comes someone. Maybe he can tell us how far it is to the nearest town. Let's wait till he gets here.

1: I beg your pardon,[32] can you tell us how long it would take us to walk to the nearest town?

2: Do you suppose he's deaf? He just stands there and looks at us without saying a word.

1: Maybe he didn't hear me. I'll try to explain our problem to him again. Look, son,[33] if it doesn't take more than two hours to walk to the nearest town, we want to go there. If it would take longer to get there, we'll stay here in the car. Now can you please[34] tell us how long it will take us to walk to that town?

2: He still doesn't answer. The best thing we can do is stay here.

---

17. **fixed:** stationary, not movable. 18. **it didn't turn out to be:** it didn't have that result; it didn't prove to be so. 19. **the other morning:** one morning recently (several days ago). 20. **the blood froze in my veins:** a metaphorical expression denoting great fear. 21. **bound:** leap; jump. 22. **cured you of hunting:** made you want to stop hunting completely. 23. **at close range:** at a short distance. 24. **little-traveled:** not having much traffic; not used by many travelers. (The opposite of *little-traveled* is *well-traveled*, not **big-traveled*.) 25. **stalls:** stops working; fails to function. 26. **ran out of:** exhausted (used up) the supply of; had no more. 27. **awful:** extremely bad; terrible. 28. **in sight:** that can be seen. 29. **gas station:** place where gasoline (petrol) is sold. 30. **kilometers:** This word is often pronounced *kilométers* (with major stress on the second syllable). 31. **Yeah:** yes (informal). 32. **I beg your pardon:** excuse me (an expression used preliminary to asking someone—especially a stranger—a question). 33. **Look, son:** an opening remark used to obtain the boy's full attention. 34. **Now can you please**…: a restrained impatient utterance introducing a repeated request.

1: I suppose you're right. Come on, let's go back to the car.

The travelers walk quickly toward the car, which is about twenty-five steps away. The boy remains silent, gazing at them intently. He keeps watching their movements while he calls to them in a loud voice:

Country Boy: Hey, mister![35] You can get to town in forty-five minutes!

2: Oh! Then you're not deaf, after all.

C: No, of course not!

1: Then why didn't you answer us before?

C: How could I answer you, without knowing how fast you walked?

THE EXCESSIVE BILL

Once a man received an exorbitant[36] bill for legal services. He considered the amount excessive, so he went right[37] to the lawyer's office. As I understand it, the conversation went like this:

Client: Is this really my bill?

Lawyer: Isn't this your name on the bill?

C: Yes.

L: Who handled[38] it?

C: One of your secretaries. The tall one with blonde hair and...

L: Yes, yes, Miss Thompson. She's very accurate. There's no doubt that the bill is correct.

C: But this bill is too much for the service I received from your office. I didn't even have the professional services of a real lawyer.

L: That doesn't have anything to do with it.[39] Here the charge is the same, whether I do the work personally or a secretary takes care of[40] a routine matter such as yours.

C: But...but it's too much!

L: Sir, you take care of your business and I'll take care of mine!

C: Obviously you don't know who I am!

L: And who are you, sir?

C: Now I understand this exorbitant bill.

L: What do you mean?

C: Simply that I belong to the same profession as you do.

L: Oh, well! Then there *was* an oversight.[41] My secretary didn't make a note of that fact. I'm very sorry about the mistake.

C: Oh, that's all right. It could happen to anyone.

L: So you're a member of my profession, eh?[42] Well, in that case, I'll give you a discount of seventy-five percent.

C: That's better! Now that the bill is for a reasonable sum, I'll pay it right away. Here's the money.

L: Thank you very much. I hope that you'll forgive this mistake.

C: Naturally.

After taking the money, the lawyer sees his client[43] to the door with great respect and courtesy, and says:

L: But tell me, friend, where is your office?

C: Oh, I don't have an office.

L: But you just told me that you had the same profession as I do.

C: Yes, I did. I'm a thief, too!

THE HAYSEED AND THE TAXI DRIVER

It's a dark, cold, dreary, rainy night. The taxi driver hasn't had a single fare[44] all day. When he goes by the entrance of the main railway station, he sees a young man from the country[45] coming out, carrying two suitcases. "Aha!" thinks the taxi driver, "here's an opportunity to make up for[46] the rest of this bad day." He quickly parks the taxi and opens the door.

Driver: Where do you want to go, sir?

Hayseed: To the Continental Hotel.

When the taxi driver hears that, his hopes of a profitable trip vanish. The Continental Hotel is scarcely[47] two blocks away. The most the hayseed[48] will give him is fifty cents, which is the minimum fare.[49] Only fifty cents. What bad luck! Then the idea of taking his passenger by a longer route occurs to him—a route that goes all around the city and then back to the Continental Hotel. This he does, and after a long time the taxi finally arrives at the entrance to the hotel.

Driver: You owe me fifteen dollars, sir.

Hayseed: What? Fifteen dollars? Do you take me for[50] a fool? You're trying to cheat me.

D: How dare you accuse me...

H: You must think I don't know my way around.[51]

D: But...

---

35. **Hey, mister!:** an attention-getting phrase, shouted from a distance. 36. **exorbitant:** excessive; much larger than it should be. 37. **right:** immediately; straightway. 38. **handled:** dealt with; managed; took care of. 39. **doesn't have anything to do with it:** has no bearing on the matter; has no connection with it; is not a factor. 40. **takes care of:** manages; handles; deals with. 41. **oversight:** unintentional omission or careless mistake. (Note the strong stress on *was*, indicating a contrast with his previous assertion that there had been no mistake.) 42. **eh?:** an interjection added at the end of a statement to ask for confirmation or express inquiry. 43. **client:** customer of someone who performs professional services. 44. **fare:** paying passenger. (For another meaning of *fare*, see note 49.) 45. **from the country:** from a rural, or farming, area (as opposed to a city or urban area). 46. **make up for:** compensate for. 47. **scarcely:** hardly; barely; only just. 48. **hayseed:** a person from a farming area not wise in the ways of the city. (Also called *yokel* or *country bumpkin*.) People in the city sometimes try to take advantage of these rural types, who seem awkward and unsophisticated. 49. **fare:** price charged for a trip. (For a different meaning of *fare*, see note 44.) 50. **take me for:** think I am. 51. **don't know my way around:** don't know how things are done.

H: Only last week I took a taxi from the station to this hotel. I know how much the trip should cost!

D: Oh...oh...all right. Now...now look[52]...uh...

H: I have a notion to[53] call the police.

D: Oh, no! Please don't do that! I have a sick wife and four hungry children.

H: All right! This time I'll let it go.[54]

D: Oh, thank you, sir. And you're right. The trip *isn't* worth fifteen dollars[55]...

H: You don't have to tell me that. I may come from the country, but I'm as smart as you city folks, and I know how much the trip ought to cost.

D: Yes, sir.

H: I just won't be cheated. I won't pay you a cent more than I paid the other taxi last week...thirteen dollars![56]

The Secret of a Long Life

I'm John Doe. I'm a journalist with an important magazine. The other day I saw a white-haired man sitting on the porch in front of his house. I could see the wrinkles in his face and neck, and his wrinkled hands. Articles on the secrets of living to an advanced age are always popular with our readers, so I decided to pursue[57] this story and discover the secret of this man's long life. As I approached him, I said:

John: Sir, would it bother you if I talked with you for just a moment?

Man: Not at all. On the contrary,[58] it would delight me. I get very bored sitting here, even for a short time. Until a little while ago I lived a full and active life without a moment's rest.

J: Well,[59] they say that a lot of activity helps one to live a long time.

M: That's true, very true. I still feel very well, although my step has slowed down a little.

The conversation continued in that vein[60] for a while. Although I try to be very considerate about obtaining information from older people, it seemed to me that it would now be all right to begin to ask some discreet[61] questions.

J: Would it bother you if I smoked a cigarette?

M: Not at all.

J: I'd offer you one, but I suppose you probably don't smoke, or drink, or...

M: On the contrary! I've always smoked my head off.[62] And until a little while ago I went dancing every night. And as for alcoholic drinks...

J: Do you mean to say that you've done these things all your life?

M: Of course. Why does that surprise you so much?

J: I've always been told that doing those things is bad for the health.

M: Ridiculous!

J: I suppose that you have another secret...a lot of fruit ...vegetables[63]...a lot of exercise in the fresh air...

M: Don't be silly! I hate exercise in the fresh air, and I don't like any kind of vegetables.

J: This is incredible!

M: What do you mean, incredible? What are you talking about?

J: It's just that I can't understand how you've been able to live like that and to have lasted so long. Tell me, how old *are* you?[64]

M: Me? I'm twenty-seven. Why?

The Doctor and the Painter

A famous painter was very worried about his sick dog, which had a badly inflamed[65] throat. But he knew that a doctor wouldn't examine a dog. So, in order to get a specialist to come to his house to look at his dog, he decided to pretend that he himself was the one who was ill. This artist was a very selfish man, so in spite of[66] the fact that it was past midnight, he called a prominent[67] throat specialist.[68]

Doctor: Hello! This is Dr. Knowitall.

Artist: Oh, Doctor Knowitall, you must come to my house immediately.

D: Sir! I am a famous throat specialist. I only see patients during the day, and by appointment.

A: But...but doctor, I'm the celebrated[69] portrait painter, Raphael DePicter, and this is an emergency.

D: I've had a busy day, and I have to operate[70] very early tomorrow morning. Can't you wait until tomorrow afternoon?

A: Oh, no, doctor! That would be too late. I beg you, please come right away.[71] And hurry!

---

52. **look:** a stalling and calming word, meaning something like "Let me explain" or "Please try to understand." 53. **have a notion to:** feel inclined to; think I should. 54. **let it go:** forget it; overlook it; excuse it. 55. **The trip isn't worth fifteen dollars:** notice the strong stress on *isn't*, indicating confirmation of the hayseed's implied negative statement. 56. **thirteen dollars:** Note the contrastive stress on *thirteen* (as against *fifteen* dollars). The surprise element in this story is that the hayseed ends up cheating himself. In most stories that begin as this one does, the man from the country outwits the "city slicker." 57. **pursue:** follow up; try to find out more about. 58. **on the contrary:** quite the opposite. 59. **well.** See note 3. 60. **in that vein:** in that way; along those lines. 61. **discreet:** proper; inoffensive; prudent. 62. **smoked my head off:** smoked a great deal. 63. **vegetables:** Notice that this word has only three syllables. 64. **How old are you?** Note the strong stress on *are*, indicating anticipation of an answer different from what might normally be expected. (For the neutral question *How old are you?* the major stress falls on *old*.) 65. **inflamed:** red and painful. 66. **in spite of:** despite. 67. **prominent:** well-known; famous.68. **throat specialist.** This compound noun regularly carries the strongest stress on the first element: *throat specialist*. 69. **celebrated:** widely known; famous. 70. **operate:** perform surgery. 71. **right away:** immediately.

D: Very well.[72] Since you are Raphael DePicter, I'll make an exception.[73] I'll come right away.

When Doctor Knowitall arrived at Mr. DePicter's house and saw that the patient was not the artist but his dog, he was furious. But immediately he thought of a plan to get even.[74] Hiding his anger, he said calmly:

D: I can't tell you right now[75] what's the matter[76] with your dog, but this medicine will alleviate it. I'll study the case and call you when I've made the diagnosis.

At midnight of the following day Mr. DePicter was awakened when his telephone rang.

A: Who is it?

D: This is Doctor Knowitall. Mr. DePicter, come quickly to my house. It's urgent!

A: But doctor, it's past twelve! Besides, early tomorrow morning I have an appointment to paint the portrait of a very important person. Can't you wait until tomorrow afternoon?

D: Oh, no! That would be too late! And what I have to say is too important to discuss over the telephone. Please hurry!

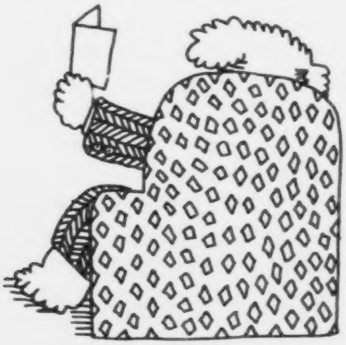
Mr. DePicter, thinking it was about his dog's illness, jumped out of bed, got dressed, and ran to the doctor's house.

A: Doctor, doctor! What's the matter? Why did you call me at this time of night?[77]

D: I'm very concerned about something, and I must know the answer right now.

A: All right, all right. What is it?

D: Please tell me: how much would you charge to paint my house?



The Patient and the Doctor

A very optimistic doctor is standing beside the bed of one of his patients,[78] who has been in the hospital for several weeks. The worried patient asks him:

Patient: Am I going to get better,[79] doctor?

Doctor: As you know, you are still quite ill.

P: Yes, I know, doctor, I know. But please don't let me go on[80] with...with false hopes. Tell me the truth!

D: I've been studying your case in my medical books, and I've done a lot of research on your problem.

P: Please don't try to soften the blow.[81] Tell me the truth, no matter what[82] it is.

D: I'm convinced that we can keep you alive. Yes, and I can even say that you are definitely going to get better!

P: Wonderful! But I don't understand how you can be so sure. Up till now all the other doctors have told me that the disease is fatal. How can you be sure that I'm going to get better?

D: I'm a scientist in the art of medicine. I've studied your case carefully.

P: Yes, yes...I know all of that, doctor...

D: In the latest medical journals they've published the results of a long study on this disease.

P: And what does this study show?

D: In your case, I'll continue the present treatment and I'll trust in the scientifically proven statistics.

P: And do these statistics show that I'm going to get better?

D: Exactly! It's been proven that ten percent of all the patients with this disease get better.

P: What? Only ten percent? But that's terrible! Does that mean that I have only one chance in ten of getting better? Are you trying to deceive me when you tell me that I'm going to get better?

D: Calm yourself! Calm yourself! You don't understand these things. It's a scientific problem.

P: Please, doctor, explain.

D: All right. As you will see, there are other factors that have to be considered.

P: What other factors? Please, tell me!

D: Listen to me. You are the tenth patient that I have treated for this disease...

P: Yes, yes, go on. So I'm the tenth patient that you've treated for this disease....I still don't understand.

D: Simple mathematics, my good man. You, being the tenth, have to get well,[83] because the other nine died!

□

---

72. **very well:** all right. 73. **make an exception:** be willing to do something different from the usual rule or pattern. 74. **get even:** take revenge. 75. **right now:** at this time. 76. **what's the matter:** what's wrong. 77. **at this time of night:** at this very late hour. 78. **patient:** someone under the care of a doctor. 79. **get better:** improve in health. 80. **go on:** continue. 81. **soften the blow:** make a sudden unexpected shock or calamity seem less severe. 82. **no matter what:** whatever. 83. **get well:** become well.

Graded Interviews for Communicative Practice

PAUL NATION
Victoria University of Wellington

Paul Nation is a senior lecturer at the English Language Institute of Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, where he trains teachers of English as a foreign language. He has also taught in Indonesia and Thailand as a Colombo Plan Expert for the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has contributed articles to American, British, and Asian language-teaching journals and is at present working on a survey of experimental research on foreign vocabulary learning.

Do you have difficulty in getting your learners to talk? Here's a simple way to give speaking practice and to help your learners pick up some useful skills on the way. This article describes how the interview activity can be used for language learning. It gives examples of several interview exercises and shows how these can be used to practice simple communication strategies and to provide graded practice in making and answering questions.

In an interview one person is usually asked questions by an interviewer or several interviewers. The interview may be conducted for one of several reasons. The person interviewed might be applying for a job, and the interview is conducted as a way of determining his suitability for the job. Or the applicant may be under consideration for a scholarship to study overseas, and the interview is a means of measuring his oral proficiency in English. Interviews may also be used to discover people's attitudes towards things as far apart as governments and literacy.

The material described here has been used as preparation for adult learners of English who were to have an interview as part of the screening process for a scholarship. However, with a few changes the interview activity can be used with younger learners also.

Preparation

The teacher can prepare the learners for an interview in the following ways:

1. The teacher acts as the interviewer and interviews the whole class. That is, he asks a question and one of the learners answers it. Then another learner answers the next question. The learner should give a short answer to the question and then add extra information. This extra information can be (1) an extra fact, (2) a reason, or (3) the applicant's feelings. Here are some examples of an interview for a scholarship.

(I= Interviewer, A= Applicant)

I: How long have you been in your present job?

A: About three years. I started working there just after I graduated. (Here the extra information is an extra fact.)

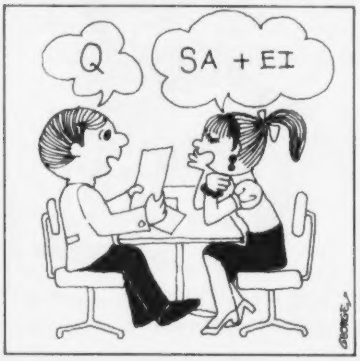
I: Do you use English much in your work?

A: Not much at all, because we don't deal with English speakers, and all our data is in Thai. (Here the extra information is a reason.)

I: When you come back to Thailand will you have the same job?

A: Yes, I will. I like my job a lot and want to continue doing it. (Here the extra information is a feeling.)

So, the applicant hears a question (Q), gives a short answer (SA), and adds some extra information (EI). Q ⟶ SA + EI.



During the activity the teacher should give the learners the following advice:

a. When you say names or technical words, say them *slowly* and *clearly*. These are the most difficult words for the interviewer to hear. Technical words include the name of your job, the place where you work, the subject you are going to study, and the place where you will study.

b. If you do not understand a question, ask the interviewer to repeat the question. It is better to do this than to give an unsuitable answer. (At this point the teacher can check that the learners know how to ask someone to repeat what he has just said.)

c. If you have to pause before you answer, say something like "Let me think" or "That's a difficult question" to show the interviewer that you have understood his question.

2. The learners as a group interview the teacher. This type of preparation gives the learners practice in making and asking questions. If the learners have difficulty in making questions, the teacher can give them the sheets for the interview a few days before they practice the interview in class. The learners then prepare written questions which the teacher checks. During the interview exercise, however, the learners look at the interview sheets and not at their prepared questions. The learners should not just ask the questions on their sheets one after the other, but should ask a question and then try to base the next question on the extra information the teacher gives. Here is an example:

I: How long have you been in your present job?
A: About three years. I like my job a lot.
I: What do you like most about it?

The strategies described above (providing extra information, showing that you have understood or not understood, and basing the next topic of discussion on what has just been said) are simple strategies to keep any type of conversation going. Learners can usually do this in their mother tongue but experience difficulty when they try to do it in a foreign language. The interview, then, is a useful way of learning and practicing these strategies.

After the learners have been prepared, they can work in pairs. One member becomes the interviewer and the other becomes the applicant. When the interview is completed, the learners in each pair change their roles: the interviewer becomes the applicant, and the applicant becomes the interviewer.

Some sample interviews

Interview exercises can be graded in order of difficulty. The easiest type is that in which the interviewer is supplied with a list of questions. The learners can prepare answers to the questions at home, making sure that they include extra information. A useful exercise for the learners is to prepare three different kinds of extra information (a fact, a reason, and a feeling) for each question.

An Interview for a Scholarship

Which part of Thailand do you come from?
Where is that?
Are you married?
Why do you want to go overseas?
Where are you going to study?
What course do you want to do?
Have you been overseas before?
Why do you want to do further study?
What's your job?
Do you like your present job?
How long have you been working?
Do you have any projects that you are responsible for?
Do you live far from your work?
What do you do when you arrive at the office?
If you worked for a private firm, do you think you would get more money?
After you come back to Thailand will you have a different job?
Do you use English much in your work?
Have you been taught by native speakers of English before?

Instead of questions, the learners can be given just headings and cue words. This requires the interviewer to frame his own questions, but it still allows the applicant to prepare a little for each question. However, the applicant cannot always anticipate exactly what the questions will be. For example, with the interview for a job given below, the interviewer, looking at the word *parents* under "Family Background," could ask any of the following questions:

Are your parents still alive?
What do your parents do?
Do you live with your parents?

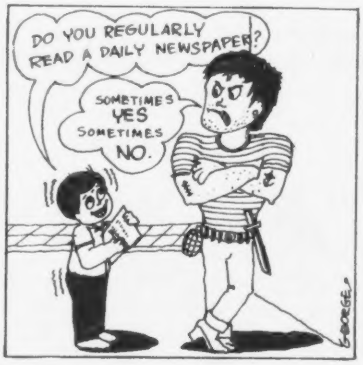
AN INTERVIEW FOR A JOB

1. *Family Background*
    - Where from?
    - Age
    - Married, engaged, single
    - Children, ages
    - Wife work?
    - Parents
2. *Education*
    - Where?
    - How long?
    - What certificates or degrees?
    - Training after finishing school
    - Foreign languages
    - Military service
3. *Experience*
    - Where worked previously?
    - How long?
    - What type of work?
    - What pay?
    - What special qualifications?
    - Why leave previous job?
4. *This Job*
    - Reasons for wanting the job
    - What $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{salary expect?} \\ \text{working conditions?} \end{array} \right.$
    - Willing to do overtime?
5. *Interests*
    - Hobbies
    - Sports
    - Special interests or skills

During the preparation for this interview the teacher can check that the learners know polite phrases like *Do you mind telling me*... and *Could you tell me*.... These should be used in questions about sensitive areas such as age, marriage, salary, reasons for leaving the previous job, and so on, but they should not be overused. The interviewer can also introduce each section of the interview by saying things like this:

> *I'd like to ask you about your education.*
>
> *Can we look at your previous experience in this type of work?*
>
> *Can you tell me about your interests outside work?*

Each of these statements is closely followed by a more detailed question: *Can you tell me about your interests outside work? Do you have any hobbies?* Another interview of this type could be a survey of reading habits or some other piece of social research.


DO YOU REGULARLY READ A DAILY NEWSPAPER?
SOMETIMES YES SOMETIMES NO.
GEORGE

A more difficult type of interview is one in which the interviewer is required to fill in a form or take notes during the interview. The interviewer must also prepare questions that will elicit the necessary information. The Job Interview Form shown on page 29 is an example of the material for this type of interview.

The learners should be told that the purpose of the interview is not just to fill in the form, but to get the applicant to speak about himself in order to judge his suitability for the job. The applicant should try to gain some control over the interview by occasionally giving long pieces of extra information when the interviewer asks a question that is particularly easy or interesting for the applicant to answer. So if the interviewer asks *What is your father's occupation?* the applicant can answer *He's retired now. He was head of the training section. He studied mathematics in America just after the Second World War.* This keeps the interview from becoming just a type of question-and-answer drill, and the applicant can try to lead the interview to interesting topics.

If interviews are difficult for the learners, the same interview (for example, a job interview) can be practiced in three stages at different times by providing (1) complete questions, then (2) cue words and headings, and finally (3) a form to fill in. More advanced learners can prepare their own interview outlines or forms. This can be done as an individual exercise or as a blackboard exercise in which the learners make suggestions that the teacher uses to build up a plan for an interview on the blackboard. This blackboard preparation is also good if the class is going to have a visitor to interview.

Other activities

Interview activities prepare learners for a variety of other spoken and written activities. Interviews are a type of role play and can take the learners even further into role play if the teacher wishes. The following topics for interviews involve a large amount of role play.

a. The learners act out an interview between a newspaper reporter and a famous person.

b. The learners prepare an interview between a history book writer and a famous person, such as Napoleon, Shakespeare, or Thomas Edison, who died a long time ago.

A JOB INTERVIEW FORM

JOB APPLIED FOR	DATE OF INTERVIEW NAME OF INTERVIEWER	
IDENTIFICATION Name:	Age:	Sex:
FAMILY BACKGROUND Married or single: Family occupations: Father's: Other relatives': (as relevant)	Children, number and ages: Wife's (or husband's):	Comment
PRESENT EMPLOYMENT Nature: 1. 2.	Organization: Pay: Date: Pay: Date:	Comment
EDUCATION AND TRAINING Schools: School examinations passed: Since school Institutions: Qualifications gained: Foreign languages:	Dates: Other distinctions: Nature of training: Dates:	Comment
JOB APPLIED FOR: Reasons: Salary expected: Overtime:		Comment
INTERESTS AND LEISURE		Comment
INTERVIEWER'S NOTES AND SUMMARY		Test Results APPEARANCE MANNER
KIND OF WORK FOR WHICH BEST SUITED		GRADING

c. A policeman interviews some people who have just seen or been in an accident.

Learners may also interview people outside class and report the findings of their interviews to the class. Interview activities can be used as a basis for written work such as writing a report, making a class newspaper, or doing a puzzle exercise. In the puzzle exercise the learners interview each other, and then, using the notes from the interview, each learner writes a short description of his partner without mentioning his name. His name and the name of the writer are, however, given at the top of the paper. The papers are collected, checked by the teacher, and distributed at random. Each learner in turn reads to the class the description that he has been given, without mentioning any names. After listening to the description the other members of the class try to guess the name of the person who was described.

The main value of the interview technique is its effectiveness in providing practice in spoken communication. An interview is an example of a combining arrangement (Nation 1977). That is, information is divided among the participants, and this information must be combined to achieve a goal. One person knows the questions but not the answers; the other knows the answers but not the questions. In order to complete the activity, it is essential that the learners communicate with each other. In the process of doing this, the learners can practice simple communication strategies to keep the conversation going by giving extra information in response to questions, by indicating lack of understanding, and by using the extra information to make new questions. The teacher can also control the activity so as to give graded practice in making and answering questions.

REFERENCES

Holmes, J. and Brown, D.F. 1976. Developing sociolinguistic competence in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly, 10*, 4, pp. 423–31.

Nation, I.S.P. 1977. The combining arrangement some techniques. *Modern Language Journal, 61*, 3, pp. 89–94. Reprinted in *English Teaching Forum, 17*, 1. □

Activities for Communication Practice

AUSTIN SANDERS
British-Senegalese Institute for the Teaching of English, Dakar

Born in Kent, England, **Austin Sanders** entered the army from grammar school and taught in East Africa. After leaving the army, his activities ranged from sales management to mountaineering instruction and expedition driving before he entered TEFL "through sheer carelessness" in 1968. Seven years' teaching and administration, mostly with the British Council in North Africa, led him to take a diploma in TEFL at the University of London, followed by an M.A. in applied linguistics at the University of Essex in 1977, "in order to gain some academic respectability." From 1977 to 1979 he taught, tested, did administration, and ran English by Radio in West Africa at the British Senegalese Institute, Dakar, Senegal.

Over the past few years there has been increasing interest in the communicative use of English in the classroom. Together with this trend there has been a movement away from teacher-centered learning modes and an increased emphasis on the teacher as a consultant and manager of the learning situation. The activities described here all have as their aim the encouragement of communication between students. Few of these activities are original; all have been found to work in the classroom.[1]

A very simple principle lies behind each activity: the teacher sets up a situation where there is "an information gap"[2] between the participants, and this gap has to be bridged either orally or in writing. In the simplest case, student A knows something that student B doesn't know but needs to know in order to carry out some task. In more sophisticated activities we may feed separate but complementary sets of information to two or more individuals or groups. These sets of information have to be put together before "the answer" emerges or the task can be completed.

So, stripped of all jargon, the activities described here are just ways of getting students to talk to each other in pairs or in groups. But the activities aim to do more than generate question-and-answer exchanges. They aim to stimulate discussion and information-trading transactions. They also encourage the student to develop information-getting strategies and to develop questioning techniques while focusing attention on the information rather than on the linguistic forms carrying that information.

Seven forms of activity are described. These provide a graduated series from highly artificial (but productive) use of language to the completely natural use of language for cooperation on a task chosen by the students.

All the activities can be adjusted in difficulty to make them suitable for a wide range of levels. Some of the activities will suggest themselves as "fillers" at the end of a lesson, while others can take several lessons to complete. Where detailed descriptions are given, the activities were prepared for an in-service teachers' course at the British Senegalese Institute in Dakar. During this course (in July 1978) the methodology was capably exploited and materials were developed by Douglas Jones, Mary Kodis, and Symme Beneoff of the Peace Corps. I am most grateful for their help and enthusiasm.

Here are the activities we used:

---

[1] My teachers (especially Richard Allwright) and my colleagues will recognize unattributed ideas and techniques. I hope they will forgive me and perhaps remind me of unacknowledged sources.

[2] "Now made explicit is the suggestion that relevant experiences for adults undergoing formal instruction in English need to include their being placed in problem-solving situations where the bridging of an 'information gap' will require communicative use of the target language on their part."—M. Long, *Encouraging Language Acquisition by Adults in a Formal Instructional Setting* (ELT Documents 76/3, ETIC British Council, London).

Sender-receiver activities

Pattern Matching. Two identical sets of about five objects are required. We have used sets of plastic building blocks (Lego), colored shapes cut from cardboard, postage stamps, etc. The two "players" sit at opposite sides of a desk, divided by a low vertical screen. The first player ("the sender") arranges his set of objects on the desk top, out of view of the second player ("the receiver"). It is then the task of the sender to describe his layout so that the receiver can copy it exactly. Inexplicit descriptions and ones that the receivers cannot understand may be clarified by the receiver's questions. A variation is to make the receiver elicit all the information by questioning. For this and other activities a time limit can be imposed. Allwright[3] suggests that this time should be so short that success is rarely possible, so that "no one need feel ashamed of failure." We did not find this essential.

Picture Sending. A similar screened desk is used, but now the sender is provided with a postcard-sized simple line drawing or diagram. The receiver's task is to make an exact copy from the sender's description, amplified by questioning.

Structure Sending. This is simply a three-dimensional variation of the first activity. We used plastic (Lego) building blocks, which come in different shapes, sizes, and colors. These blocks can be clipped together to form three-dimensional structures. The receiver has to duplicate the structure with his identical set of pieces. Further variations are obviously possible, and you can try using pairs or small groups of students as senders and receivers. Production of written instructions is quite difficult but worth trying when you have time for them to shuttle back and forth for the necessary clarifications.

The three activities described above can be pitched at a suitable level of difficulty by varying time limits and by adjusting the number and degree of similarity of the objects or the degree of complexity of the structures and line drawings. The following activities also lend themselves to work at a variety of levels as different degrees of difficulty are built into the given information.

Map Directions. An "oldie" but still worth using. Sender and receiver have copies of the same map or street plan. Starting from a specified point, the sender directs the receiver to another location. Questions from the receiver, as usual, clarify ambiguous directions. Many variations are possible with, for example, the sender describing what he can "see" from a point he selects and the receiver deciding where that point must be. Try written instructions, too.

Group problem-solving activities

Problem-Solving Using Taped Information. These are as much fun to think up and produce as they are for the students to do. They are particularly useful for sparking free discussion. Two or more complementary sets for information are recorded, preferably in conversation or dialogue form. One group or individual listens to one set of information while another group or individual listens to the different but complementary dialogue. Discussion in pairs, fours, and finally the whole class leads (sometimes) to a solution of the problem posed.

For example, we posed the question of whether a new school should be built inside or outside a medium-sized town, and we recorded two conversations carrying the following points:

Conversation A

For town center location: Distances less, so less time/money wasted on students' travel. Central for town and suburb dwellers. Plenty of public transport. Close to library, hospital, etc.

Against town center location: Noise and air pollution. Traffic dangers. Less housing available for teachers.

For out-of-town location: Land cheaper. Air cleaner. Less traffic danger.

Conversation B

For out-of-town location: Room for subsequent expansion. Room for sports field, pool, etc. Room for teachers' housing. Well water available. Bus transport easy to arrange.

Against out-of-town location: Some pupils would have long distances to travel. Poor access to library, hospital, etc.

Against town center location: Land expensive. No room for future expansion. No room for sports field, etc.

Two short conversations, of about three minutes each, comfortably carry this information load. The conversations are easy to record by ad libbing from the list of points for and against.

This type of activity lends itself well to a language laboratory session. Odd-numbered positions can listen to conversation *A* while the evens hear *B*. Discussion can then take place, initially between neighboring students and later between larger groups, with perhaps a full-class follow-up in the classroom.

Discussion and exchange of information is the object of the activity, so there is no right or wrong answer—though, as here, the information given may point strongly in a particular direction.

Having been primed with ideas and given a chance to express and exchange them in pairs and small groups, the students become more willing to participate in a full-class discussion. Such "primed discussions" become more fruitful learning experiences when students go beyond the given information and start introducing their own ideas and feelings.[4]

---

[3] R. Allwright, *Language Learning through Communication Practice*. (ELT Document 76/3 ETIC, British Council, London).

[4] See, for example, E.W. Stevick, *Memory, Meaning, and Method* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1976), especially Chapter III, "Memory and the Whole Person."

Because we want to involve our students' interests and feelings, it is essential to fit our activities to their cultural and emotional background. Naturally, this is easier with a culturally homogeneous group. An attempt to do this in Senegal led to the production of "Mamadou's Problem."

Mamadou is a Senegalese student who has just completed his degree course at a university in France. His problem is what to do next. Should he return to Senegal to work for the good of his family and country? Should he stay in France, where he will earn more money and have fewer family responsibilities? Or should he take up the offer of a scholarship to the United States to continue his studies but to earn nothing for a few more years? Three taped conversations were used to present arguments for and against each course of action. First, Mamadou and his father discuss the pros and cons of Mamadou's return to work in Senegal. Naturally, the father would like this. In the second dialogue, between Mamadou and a French fellow-student, the advantages of working in Europe are advanced. Mamadou, however, mentions some of the disadvantages, such as taxation, climate, and the loss of contact with his family and cultural heritage. The third dialogue between Mamadou and an American friend covers the points for and against taking up the scholarship in the United States.

After presenting the three conversations to three different groups of students you again have an option. You can either start discussion and the exchange of information in groups of three or you can jump straight into a full-class discussion. Remember, though, that pair and small-group interactions are closer to the everyday situations in which most of our students will need to use their language. We also found that initial work in small groups gives people a chance to develop their ideas and their expression of those ideas so that they are better prepared to participate in a subsequent full-group discussion. Activities of this degree of complexity can (and probably should) be used also for note-taking practice.

More advanced projects

Sometimes we find ourselves dealing with students who will later have to cope with seminar situations. The next type of activity was originally conceived as a stepping-stone to full-scale individual seminar presentations, but it soon became clear that pair-work and group-work on the projects generated plenty of discussion. It must be admitted, however, that the next two activities are more difficult to "tune" to levels below those of intermediate language proficiency and really come into full use at intermediate to advanced levels.

Library Projects. Look around your library for complementary pairs, or even groups, of books. Then set a task that will require information from both or all of them. Tell students where to find their information, allocate the reading to specific students, pair or group them, and set deadlines for their joint presentations. These pair projects come from the in-service teachers' course already mentioned, but the topic obviously doesn't have to be TEFL!

1. Using Davies's *Situational Lesson Plans* (Macmillan) and Wilkins's *Notional Syllabuses* (Oxford), prepare a joint ten-minute presentation on the differences between notional and situational syllabuses. Try to show which you think more suitable for various kinds of language courses; for example, beginners, review, etc.

2. Using Corder's *The Visual Element in Language Teaching* (Longmans) and Vernon's *The Audio-Visual Approach to Modern Language Teaching* (N.C.A.V.A. in Education), prepare a ten-minute illustrated joint presentation on "Visual Aids I Could Have Made but Never Have Before."

In addition to demanding research and communication at the preparation stage, these presentations can be used as the jumping-off point for general discussion, and time should be allowed for this. Once again it is important to match topics with our students' interests, and there is no reason to stop at library projects. What about pop-record projects, with discussion of the merits of lyrics and performances of similar or very different performances?

We are now within striking distance of the real communicative use of language, the use of language outside the classroom in order to get something done.

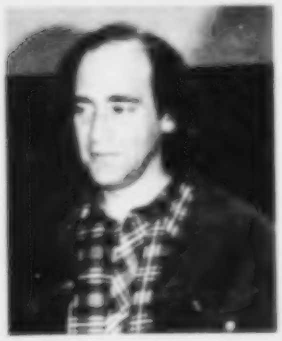
Outside Projects. These can be as fanciful or as practical as you and your students wish. The essential is that they should capture the interest and imagination of the participants. And they should produce results. "Outside" means outside the classroom and probably outside the institution, too. If you really get your students involved, it will also mean outside class hours. If it doesn't, then think again. Let the students participate in the suggestion and selection of projects. In Britain my graduate students have been asked to collect human teeth. They did. In Morocco a cookbook was produced. The possibilities are not even limited by the teacher's ideas. Let the students decide. Most students have a very real pride in their country, its customs, dress, cooking, and so on. You can harness this pride and encourage your students to produce tourist itineraries ("off the beaten track"), recipes, traditional stories, riddles, ritual insults, comparisons of their proverbs and those in English, etiquette for the newcomer. Just add your own twenty topics and start!

At this stage of operations your students will collect, exchange, discuss, and select information. They will probably transform it, and it is no longer (I hope) a heresy to let them occasionally translate it.

Set goals, or rather let your students negotiate their goals with you and with each other, then switch off your "teacher mode" and let it be known that you are now "a consultant in communication." Provide your students, on a demand basis, with the language they need and let them work. They're willing and able.

An Effective Method for Teaching English Verb Forms

ROBERT HAYMOND
The University of Alberta



Robert Haymond teaches English as a second language in the evening while pursuing his studies for a Ph.D. in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta, in Canada. Mr. Haymond has published a previous article on second-language learning in the *Canadian Modern Language Review*, May 1974.

I have often felt dissatisfied in attempting to help my adult students of English as a second language untangle the labyrinth of meanings associated with English verb tenses and forms; other teachers have noted a comparable dissatisfaction. I have never found a grammar for foreign students that has developed a suitable method for teaching verbs. As a result, by wholly piecemeal efforts I have developed my own methodology, which, though by no means perfect, is considerably better than anything else I have come upon. I believe my method is now cohesive enough to be shared.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

The new methods of teaching foreign languages that came about in the fifties and sixties—the mechanical drilling and transposition of elements without explanation of meaning, definition, and derivation—have shown themselves to be bankrupt where the adult learner is concerned. These methods are largely found nowadays in audiolingual-based programs. The basic principle of such methodology is that use precedes meaning.

There are four factors that militate against employing the "use before meaning" method of second-language teaching for adult immigrants. The first is simply that they do not integrate rapidly into English-speaking society (as their own children do, for instance), so that their opportunities for using the new language are limited. Adults, busy with jobs or job-hunting, housework, children, and a variety of other obstacles and anxieties, do not have the time to practice English outside of class that we, as teachers, would wish for them.

Secondly, "use before meaning" goes against the adult learning process. People seek to know the meaning of what they learn, and why they are learning it. They demand this knowledge, and if they don't get it they will set up emotional blocks against learning the second language. They refuse to consider themselves mechanical robots who must first memorize various patterns and then wait for explanations to come at some distant future time. Besides, such a method is demanding.

A third factor is simply that the most efficient means of learning is to learn principles.[1] To attempt to memorize discrete bits of information—various grammatical patterns—is like trying to memorize nonsense syllables. But an overall principle makes discrete bits of information fall into place. It provides a deep and satisfying explanation of how the language works.

The fourth factor is that the "use before meaning" method depends on the proposition that adults will learn a second

---

I would like to thank Professor Ruth Pearce of the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, for her ability to listen openly and critically and for her consistently sound advice during the years I have taught ESL under her supervision.

language the way they learned their mother tongue as a child. This is a patently incorrect theory. Use itself will not suffice, at least not as an efficient method of language learning. Unlike the child, who, through constant exposure and practice, learns implicit principles through a kind of mental diffusion, the adult does not learn in this narrowly osmotic way. The adult's mental apparatus is not as flexible as a child's; his/her mental veins are not as porous. Besides, when taught principles, the adult already has a basis for understanding: his/her own language. Cognitively speaking, the adult has a better developed basis than the child for comprehending principles.

As I reflect on my own method of teaching verbs I realize it is not unlike the concepts that Benjamin Whorf used to explain the Hopi verb structure.[2] I deal with two main concepts: *duration* and *quality*. *Duration* refers to the amount of time an event or action takes. In using the present tense, for instance, an English speaker might mean a sharp instant of time, minutes, hours, or even days, etc. The time span might include the past and the future. This is inevitably confusing to the foreign student of English. Unlike the native speaker, s/he does not come to English with an implicit knowledge of duration.

The concept of *quality* refers to how an event or action functions. Examples of qualities are *specificity*, *continuity*, *regularity*, *number*, and *possibility*. Through emphasizing and explaining these two concepts the implicit meaning of the various verb tenses and forms begins to take hold. When students lack knowledge of implicit meanings they feel a certain frustration. We, as teachers, feel their frustration, and, reciprocally, they feel ours.

My desire in this short article is to share with you a method that has helped me in my teaching, and might help you as well. It is not a perfect method. I doubt that we will ever find a method which, like a neat formula, will allow the student of English as a second language to plug in every single variation and nuance that s/he comes upon. English is far too "messy" and idiosyncratic for that. Because English is a living language it is continually evolving, and it is a tribute to English that it cannot be easily set down into simple formulas, or even complicated ones. Explaining this to students helps them to cope with the multitudinous exceptions that do not fit into the organizing principles that they are in the process of learning. This also contributes to an aesthetic appreciation of the language without which there is only hard work and drabness.

THE TEACHING METHOD

I begin by explaining the matter in the Verb Tables (presented further on), the present tense first. This is done via verbal elucidation, pantomime, gestures, and cartoon figures on the blackboard; in short, I do anything I can to clarify the written material. After the present tense is understood in its various facets it becomes gradually easier to apply these concepts to the past, and then the future, tenses.

After explaining the content of Table I (the present tense), I ask my students to make up sentences of their own, beginning with the simple form in its two variations and continuing in order through the perfect continuous. After that I name a verb—always a different one—and point to one of the verb forms, expecting the person I call on to make up a sentence using the verb and verb form just announced. I call on the students in random order, so that they must always be ready to answer, even when not called on.

Choosing the correct form

The third step is to use drills (taken from an appropriate grammar book) that require the student to decide, from the context of the sentence, the proper verb form to use. For some sentences more than one verb form is grammatically correct, and at this point an illuminating phenomenon occurs. Let us suppose the following sentence occurs: *Mr. James (teach) English from ten o'clock until noon*. The student, bewildered at first when s/he discovers that all four verb forms would be grammatically correct in this sentence, feels threatened that the apparently "secure" formula for using verb forms is not so safe after all. Here the teacher must explain that the question that should be asked is not "Which verb form is grammatically correct?" but rather "What do *you* mean? What do *you* wish to express?" You should explain that the power of the English language derives in part from its very flexibility, that the grammatical usage, so apparently without fixed rules, allows us great power in expressing our own subjective meanings, and this includes nuances and fineness of expression. I ask the students, "What do *you* wish to say? Once I know that, I will be able to tell you the proper grammatical form to use." Since English is only partially ruled by frozen grammatical forms, the correct verb form is often a matter of meaning, and that is a subjective affair. Once the student grasps this, s/he is less likely to feel betrayed and often responds to the novelty, power, and beauty of the language. Of course, the whole process of introducing and teaching verbs is not an overnight affair—appreciation of English is gained only in time.

It seems almost too prosaic to write this, but our own attitude, as teachers, towards the English language has an enormous effect on the student. Teaching English effectively lies not only in clarifying and sharpening techniques but also in fostering an attitude of appreciation for English. If we convey our own respect for the language, this will help the student to remove emotional barriers which hinder the rapid acquisition of a second language.

The final step

The final methodological step is the integration of all that has been learned about the verbs. If I am teaching a conversation class, I require a short speech (about four or five minutes) in which the student is requested to use all four verb forms that s/he has been studying. The topic of discourse is given a week beforehand so that the student has adequate preparation time. Notes are allowed, but reading of a prepared script is definitely prohibited.

For a writing class the same format is followed except that an essay is required rather than a speech. The essay is usually done as homework rather than in class, because of the time element. For the present tense the topic might be "My Present Circumstances." For the past, I generally ask for something such as "My Childhood," and for the future I find the topic "My Hopes and Ambitions" to be useful. Of course, the essay or speech topic is not important itself; it just provides a ready vehicle for integrating the verb forms of the tense under study. Choosing subjective and personal topics makes it possible for all students to write or talk about something with which they are familiar. And sometimes, because the topics are personal, the student, under pressure in a strange culture, is given the opportunity to express inner feelings and difficulties which might otherwise remain private and constricted. The unburdening effect is almost always positive.

HOW TO USE THE VERB TABLES

I begin with the present tense, proceed to the past when the present is fully understood and integrated, and then to the future. The first step involves the mechanical details of how the various verb forms are structured, as shown in the column headed *Example*. After briefly reviewing these, I ask students to study them at home until they are one hundred percent familiar with them. The mechanics of forming the verbs should be known to the point of automaticity, but at advanced levels I don't feel class time should be taken up by drilling them.

Turning then to the column headed *Meaning*, I explain the brief definitions in detail, all the time referring to the column headed *Diagram* as a pictorial support. Broken lines represent possibility and double lines emphasis. The first step is to contrast the Simple form 1*a* with the Continuous. In the first case, I say, the moment is short, with a feeling (quality) of contraction; in the second case the moment endures longer, with a feeling of expansion. By comparing the two forms, by contrasting the inwardness of one expression with the outwardness of the other, the meaning becomes clear to the student. I also mention that this variation of the simple form is not used very often.

As to the Simple form 1*b*, the more prominent variation, it has the meaning of regularity or habitualness, or a modification of these when used with words like *sometimes* or *often*; when used with *never* it implies the negation of regularity, a complete absence. In terms of duration, this form includes the past and the future: *The sun comes up every day*. The idea that the present tense in English may include the past and future never ceases to have a stunning effect on students, who wonder what we mean by "present tense" anyway. Here one must again speak of the inappropriateness of grammatical categories and how the word *present* does not always mean the present time, but should be understood as a designating device that sometimes misleads. Students must often overcome mental blocks in order to comprehend this, for many have previously been taught English grammar in a more traditional way.

The perfect form

In teaching the perfect form I show how an action or event could have begun at a specific time in the past, or even an unknown time, and continued until the just recently completed past, with the added possibility (about fifty-fifty) of its continuance through the present time.

The perfect continuous is related to and contrasted with the perfect. However, it emphasizes the continuity of an action or event, like waves on a seashore. With this form of the perfect, the probability of an event or action continuing into the present is increased (about eighty-twenty). I use an example to show this intensifying effect: "Suppose you were waiting on a street corner in the dead of winter in Edmonton for a friend who was supposed to meet you at six o'clock. Your friend does not come until six-thirty, by

TABLE I
PRESENT TENSE

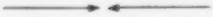
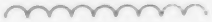
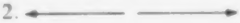
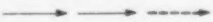
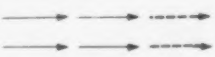
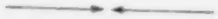
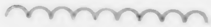
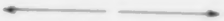
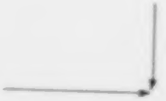
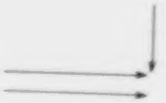
Form	*Example*	*Meaning*	*Diagram* Past Present Future
1. Simple	1*a*. *I jump now.* 1*b*. *I always jump.*	1*a*. Contracted moment 1*b*. Regularity	1*a*.  1*b*. 
2. Continuous	2. *I am jumping now.*	2. Expanded moment	2. 
3. Perfect	3. *I have often jumped.*	3. Action or event beginning at a specified or unspecified time in the past continuing until or through the present.	3. 
4. Perfect Continuous	4. *I have been jumping. for a long time.*	4. Same as #3 but emphasizes continuity and likeliness of action continuing into the present.	4. 

TABLE II
PAST TENSE

Form	*Example*	*Meaning*	*Diagram* Past
1. Simple	1*a*. *I jumped then.*	1*a*. Contracted moment	1*a*. 
	1*b*. *I jumped all the time.*	1*b*. Regularity	1*b*. 
2. Continuous	2. *I was jumping then.*	2. Expanded moment	2. 
3. Perfect	3. *I had jumped before then.*	3. An action, beginning at a specified or unspecified time in the past, *before* another action, also in the past.	3. 
4. Perfect Continuous	4. *I had been jumping for a long time, before I saw you.*	4. Same as #3 but emphasizes the continuity of the most distant past action.	4. 

which time you are cold, shivering, tired, and angry. Which sentence would you use to show your unhappiness with the situation: (1) *I have waited for you since six o'clock* or (2) *I have been waiting for you since six o'clock*?" Of course the answer is the second sentence, and the example begins to clarify everything.

The past tense

So much for the present tense; when this is well understood I switch to the past. I begin by stating that the English language expresses a linear, unidimensional concept of time, that it always goes forward, and, once gone, it cannot come back again. There are languages that express a different cultural understanding of time, and so it is important to state that fact. I then say that in the English past tense—all forms of the past—the action or event spoken about is over with, completed, not happening now, finished.

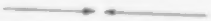
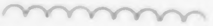
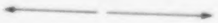
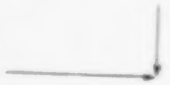
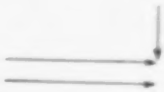
We encounter two difficulties with the past tense that we did not have with the present tense. The first has to do with the reference of the past perfect and past perfect continuous to two actions or events that do not occur simultaneously. I point out how two actions or events can both have occurred in the past, but at different times. The one occurring in the distant past takes the perfect or perfect continuous, and the second, if expressed with a verb, takes either the past simple, continuous, or present perfect. The two actions or events—the one in the distant past and the other in the more recent past—are related by a conjunction such as *before* or *after* which shows that the two actions were not simultaneous.

The second difficulty concerns the possibility of simultaneous actions or events occurring in the past, since this must now be contrasted with the possibility of two non-simultaneous ones. In this case it can be shown how the two phrases are structured using a combination of the simple and/or continuous forms and woven together by the words *when* or *while* or an equivalent. The word *when* refers to the contracted moment (and the simple form), whereas *while* refers to the expanded moment (and the continuous form).

The future tense

The future tense is explained as an action or event that has not yet occurred, which is not occurring now, but has the possibility or impossibility of occurring in a time yet to

TABLE III
FUTURE TENSE

Form	*Example*	*Meaning*	*Diagram* Future
1. Simple	1*a*. *I will jump.*	1*a*. Contracted moment	1*a*. 
	1*b*. *I will jump all the time.*	1*b*. Regularity	1*b*. 
2. Continuous	2. *I will be jumping tomorrow.*	2. Expanded moment	2. 
3. Perfect	3. *I will have jumped before I see you.*	3. One action occurring at a specified time in the future *before* another event, also occurring in the future.	3. 
4. Perfect Continuous	4. *I will have been jumping before you get there.*	4. Same as #3 but emphasizes the continuous nature of the first (nearest) action in the future.	4. 

come (the future). By this time the student is fully aware of the methodology I use in teaching the verb forms, so teaching the future tense is comparatively easy. I will point out some variations with respect to the future that have not been dealt with in the present and past.

I mention that the perfect and perfect continuous forms in the future, while acceptable grammatical forms, are not often heard in the spoken language.

The use, in subordinate clauses, of the present tense when the future is meant (*I will go when you come*) is explained as an idiosyncratic and illogical feature of the language which, nevertheless, English speakers must put up with. "By not using this correctly," I tell students, "you would have been discovered as a spy during the war, for no native speaker of English would ever make that mistake."

Students frequently ask me the difference between *shall* and *will*. After struggling with this question for several years, I have concluded that for North American English *will* is the more common and acceptable form for the future tense, regardless of person, whereas in Great Britain *shall* is more commonly used. While *shall* is grammatically correct on this continent it connotes emphasis, urgency, or determination when used to designate the future. A few examples in a declamatory voice suffice to show the difference.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As I have already mentioned, this method—and I refer particularly to the Verb Tables—is not perfect. The teacher and student will find items that either do not fit into the schema or actually contradict it. I have two comments: first, it is the best device I have yet seen for teaching verbs, in that it covers the greatest number of cases without becoming unforgivably complex; secondly, I welcome improvements on this method, just as I have no doubt that I will evolve it further myself. There is no reason that an expanded Verb Table could not include something on the conditional and subjunctive, as well as the passive voice.

One last word to the reader who plans to implement this method in his/her own teaching: do not neglect the nontechnical aspects of the teaching method! No technical apparatus, such as the Verb Tables presented here, will work effectively unless taught in the context of appreciation and respect for language, and in this case I refer to the power and beauty of the English language.

REFERENCES

Schmidt, W. H. O. 1965. Processes of learning in relation to different kinds of materials to be learnt. In *Medical education in South Africa*, ed. J.V.O. Reid and A. J. Wilmot. Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press.

Whorf, B. 1956. *Language, thought and reality*. Ed. J. Carroll. Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

FORUM NEWS & IDEAS

CHILE

Establishing Behavioral Objectives

OMER SILVA V.
Institute of Teaching Specialties, Austral University

Recent changes in education theory—especially those in the area of education technology (analysis of systems, instructional designs, etc.) have had an important influence on language teaching. All these new emphases point to the need for giving careful consideration to instructional objectives—that is, the goals to be reached by the end of the teaching period (the lesson, unit, or course). Since the purpose of the learning experience is to bring about a behavioral change, instructional objectives must be expressed in terms of measurable and observable behavior.

Instructional objectives in TEFL

In teaching English as a foreign language, the desired behaviors, or instructional objectives, too often remain obscure; the teacher has no clear expectation of what the students should achieve by the end of the instructional period. More often than not, the teacher's preparation for the class work does not go beyond making a list of linguistic contents: lexical items and grammatical structures unlinked to the goals to be achieved.

There is in TEFL a kind of universal objective: the development of the four basic skills (understanding, speaking, reading, and writing). The teacher's task is to help the students achieve this objective by separating it into specific behaviors that are observable and measurable, specifying and grading the learning activities that lead the students to the achievement of the desired behaviors.

Omer Silva V. teaches TEFL methodology in the Department of Education, Faculty of Letters and Education, Austral University, Valdivia, and supervises practice teaching in the high schools of that city. He has also taught English at the Liceo de Niñas and the Escuela Técnica in Valdivia. Several articles by Mr. Silva on educational matters have been published in professional journals in Chile and Argentina.

Four requirements

An EFL objective stated in behavioral terms should fulfill the following requirements:

1. It must be stated from *the student's point of view*.
2. It should specify the *condition* under which the teacher elicits the desired behavior.
3. There must be a *minimum acceptable level* of performance.
4. It must be stated in terms of an *observable and measurable behavior*.

Let us see in more specific terms what each of these four requirements demands of us:

The Student's Point of View. The activities of the teacher, which guide the students in the learning process, should not be mistaken for the changes in student behavior which constitute the end product. We must state our objectives in terms of a *specific behavior on the part of the learners*. We must use *precise* verbs (such as those exemplified in Group 1) rather than vague or ambiguous verbs (such as those in Group 2).

Group 1
(One interpretation)

to write
to express in writing
to recite
to identify
to recognize
to discriminate
to differentiate
to imitate
to repeat (after the teacher)
to permute orally
to associate or match
to produce orally
to name
to read (aloud/silently)
to choose
to copy
to spell
to list
to answer (orally/in writing)
to manipulate sentences
to make up sentences
to frame sentences
to replace (substitute)
to convert (transform, change)
to conjugate
to locate
to ask questions
to put into practice
to substitute (replace)

Group 2
(Many interpretations)

to know
to understand
to appreciate
to value
to believe
to realize
to see the difference
to analyze
to evaluate
to receive
to organize
to characterize

Condition. The condition for eliciting the behavior relates to the *controls imposed by the teacher* on the teaching-learning situation. Some conditions might be expressed as follows:

...without looking at the blackboard
...with the books closed
...by listening to a record
...using DO and DOES
...by repeating after the teacher
...given a list of words (a recorded dialogue)
...on hearing a word
...on seeing an object
...after listening (to a song, a dialogue)

Minimum Acceptable Skill. It is always advisable to demand from the students a *minimum performance* to show attainment of a specific behavior. The fact that a pupil is able to answer one question orally may not be proof of such achievement. Some standard such as the following must be specified: "By using DO and DOES the student will be able to ask and answer at least three questions with normal stress and intonation."

The Objective Stated in Terms of an Observable and Measurable Behavior. In any teaching-learning situation there must be an evaluation of the students' progress toward the behaviors that constitute the objectives of the lesson or course; therefore these behaviors must be *observable and measurable*.

Some linguistic behaviors are not observable, and it is up to the teacher to make them so. An example is the ability to *understand*, included in the basic skills of the audiolingual approach. The teacher cannot view the process of understanding; however, he can view the asking and answering of questions. To manipulate questions and answers is an observable behavior for classroom work.

A final word

A final observation: The linguistic orientation of foreign language teaching has been overemphasized. It is time to focus on other aspects of the teaching-learning situation. As a starting point, we must analyze objectives more deeply and more accurately. In my opinion, a well-stated objective is the cornerstone of the teaching process.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Double-Purpose Language Lessons

Dušan Josef
Technical University, Brno

In teaching English to adults I have been dissatisfied with the fact that the first lessons (and sometimes the first months of English language study) include only linguistic information—that is, information about the language, not about the facts that language should convey. Our extralinguistic models are too often a neutral type of living room, flat, town, personality, trip, accident, story, etc.

I have felt that even in a language lesson the student's attention should be attracted by extralinguistic information. With this in mind I had a group of young students of architecture and civil engineering produce wall charts, maps, plans, and sketches for English language lessons.

Designing the wall charts

Our creative program had two principal aims: (1) to present information about Czechoslovakia for English speaking foreigners, and (2) to provide Czech and Slovak students with information on Great Britain and the United States. I gathered material to be made into wall charts for the above two purposes by the civil-engineering and architecture students. Our drawings were made on transparent paper so that they could be reproduced at any time for any number of teachers or students.

Dušan Josef is senior assistant in the department of languages at the Technical University in Brno, Czechoslovakia. He has written a series of six textbooks for architects and construction engineers, and has collaborated in the design of an Intensive Language Teaching Center. Dr. Josef has contributed a number of articles to the Forum during the past ten years.

The first group of pictures represented five traditional but—I'm sorry to say—still neutral subjects: a family, a living room, a hotel, a family house, and a town. We tried to produce pictures full of life, action, humor, and high spirits, hoping that these would have a like effect on our students, as we did not like dull, boring lessons that made our students yawn and become sleepy. So our wall charts contain little figures: funny tourists, children, little animals, etc. And they are engaged in actions—running, crying, quarreling, laughing, shouting, in full conversation.

We completed our wall charts with two groups of words: on the upper part of the chart is a collection of from forty to eighty nouns; on the lower part, a collection of twenty to thirty verbs. The nouns and corresponding figures in the drawings are numbered. Moreover, we produced a little students' book containing a picture in reduced size, a list of expressions with phonetic transcription and Czech equivalents, some drills, and descriptions of individual sections of the picture.

An illustrated town map

Our pictures were useful presentations of extralinguistic reality, which helped our students describe a family, a house, a town, a hotel, and a living room. But they did not wholly satisfy our desire to give useful information not only about the language but beyond it as well. So we prepared a large map of our town, Brno, the capital of Moravia, in three colors, with thirty-four drawings showing the sights: churches, cathedrals, universities, swimming pools, playgrounds, railway station and bus terminal, the local castle, and of course our faculty of civil engineering, the two local rivers, some factories, the local zoo and dam reservoir with the recreation area, some hotels and student hostels, the faculty of architecture, exhibition grounds, the airfield, and old and new theaters, the artificial ski run, and local museums and galleries. After working with this type of wall chart the student is trained not only in how speak but also in what to speak about, so that he can serve as a guide for an English-speaking friend. (The information on the chart is even useful for the Czechoslovak student himself, giving him some of the less known details about his town.) Our map also contained the town's symbol—a crocodile and a wheel (related to local legends)—as well as the coats of arms of the town as a whole and of individual sections of it.

Practical language training with this type of teaching aid is of course more attractive for our students than the previously used neutral and anonymous plan of *any* town. The students enjoyed speaking about their town for ten to fifteen minutes, and an experienced teacher well knows how much effort is sometimes required to get five or ten sentences from our students without endless waiting and questioning!

A partner wall chart would, of course, be an illustrated map of an American or English town. Such a map is more difficult for us to make than the map of Brno, as the subject is less familiar. But we hope to accomplish the research and produce such a map in the near future. In the meantime we have a collection of about five maps of Great Britain—each map illustrated with some outstanding examples of an architectural style.

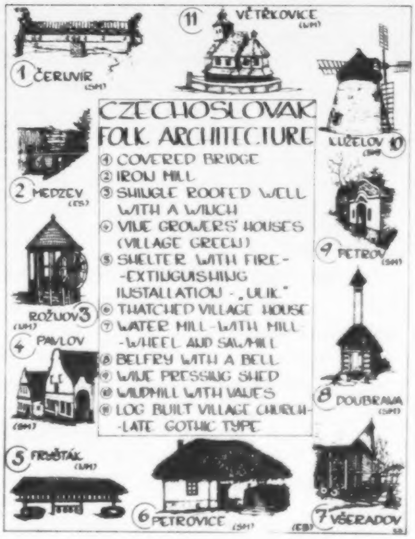
Other illustrated maps

Maps and wall charts from the history of civil engineering represent one of our main interests. During two years we prepared a "Map of Historical and Remarkable Bridges in Bohemia and Moravia." It contains about fifty of all sorts, some simple, some quite elaborate; the illustrations of the bridges bear English legends with dates. We have other illustrated maps showing interesting historical and technical buildings in the region of Brno and South Moravia.

Biographical posters

In our lessons we use textbooks, films, records, tapes, and television. Why not use posters to convey knowledge of the language and of extralinguistic reality? A poster can "speak" even when the teacher is absent—on the wall of the classroom, in a corridor, on the wall of a language laboratory. Students standing in front of the examiner's room waiting for an examination to begin observe our wall charts and posters with their English-language legends.

We now have a series of biographical posters of well-known architects, which contain the following information: (*a*) a portrait of the architect; (*b*) one, two, or three sketches of his buildings; (*c*) a short description of one of the buildings; (*d*) a short biography. Thus the linguistic and extralinguistic parts of the poster are balanced. So far we have posters on Christopher Wren, a famous British architect, and outstanding American architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe, whose Tugendhadt House still stands in Brno. Other posters in this series deal with historical Czech architects, Czech folk architecture, and modern architect D. Jurkovič. This series will be continued.



A useful goal

Our intention is obvious. We are aware of the fact that the very first lessons must give basic information about the language. But our aim is to shorten the purely linguistic period of language teaching as much as possible and, after a few weeks, to combine useful linguistic knowledge with useful extralinguistic knowledge. Our lessons will be perhaps more demanding—giving double information—but they will also be more attractive and more interesting. This is certainly a worthwhile goal.

GERMANY

Why Murder Your Pupils When They Can Laugh Themselves to Death?

PETER FISCHEL

Dakin wrote—quoting Wilhelm von Humboldt—"We cannot teach a language: we can only create the conditions under which it will be learned,"[1] and certainly a well-placed joke may contribute to that end. Unlike most of the things a teacher says, his jokes stand a chance of being listened to and therefore remembered. This means they may be made to serve at least two purposes: illustrating a teaching point and practicing listening comprehension. And even if they do nothing else, they may waken his pupils—if only for a brief moment—out of that dull, animal lethargy which is so typical of most classes when they aren't giving trouble.

Of course, jokes are not the answer to every problem: nothing ever is, as the following anecdote may illustrate.

In a sleepy police station in the American South the phone rings. "Duty Sergeant here."

"Oh, officer, what can I do? A skunk has gotten into my cellar and I simply don't know how to get rid of it."

"Easy, lady. Just lay a trail of breadcrumbs from the cellar out into the open. The skunk will follow that and be gone."

An hour later the phone rings again. "Officer, I did just what you said, and now I have two skunks in my cellar."

Jokes and anecdotes

Since the words *joke* and *anecdote* have now been used, it might be well to define them and see what can be achieved with each.

A joke, for present purposes, is the short, punchy story that can be used to drive home a point of grammar or vocabulary, or just to break the rhythm of a lesson. The anecdote goes all the way from the simple shaggy-dog story up to sophisticated recordings of Peter Ustinov for really advanced classes. Its aim is both to get the class to leave the lesson with a smile on its collective face, and to practice listening comprehension. When presenting anecdotes, the teacher should be prepared to let his pupils hear English spoken as naturally as possible and to give them texts that may be a little beyond their language level, in order to get them used to understanding general contexts even if they do not know every single one of the words used.

Classroom English and natural English

Students get enough practice in listening to "filtered" or "classroom" English the rest of the time. Sittler has some interesting remarks about classroom English and compares it with the "educated informal English" used by native speakers when communicating with one another.[2] After commenting on the abbreviations, omissions, weak pronunciations, and other phenomena typical of informal English, he continues:

> Students often comment on how fast English is spoken. Usually, however, such an impression is due not so much to the speed with which the language is spoken as to the characteristic of running words together. This, coupled with the fact that many of the most frequently used words in English, when unaccented, are not pronounced as the students expect them to sound, accounts for much of the difficulty in aural comprehension. If students are exposed in their classes only to the "classroom dialect" of English, they will undoubtedly have great difficulty

---

[1] J. Dakin. *The Language Laboratory and Language Learning*. London: Longman, 1973, p. 11.

[2] R. C. Sittler, "Teaching Aural Comprehension," in *English Teaching Forum*, Vol. XIII, 1975.

Peter Fischel, born and educated in England, has lived in Germany since 1958, working first as a translator, then in sales promotion, and finally as head of the language training department at Volkswagen Headquarters in Wolfsburg. He has also taught English at the local Volkshochschule, a municipal institute of adult education, where he prepared students for the University of Cambridge EFL examinations.

in understanding natural spoken English. Therefore if our objective in audiolingual work is to enable our students to communicate, and if comprehension is an important part of this communication, it would seem that we should expose them to informal English rather than to the formal variety.

This is very much Dakin's view when he writes: "Listening is potentially an effective means of presentation and practice in language." And he goes even further when he states that "structures and vocabulary can sometimes be learned quite independently of the teacher and the syllabus, simply by listening to people talking."[3]

Shaggy-dog stories

Those readers who have followed me so far without canceling their subscriptions to this journal will now be expecting to be given some examples of a shaggy-dog story, so here are two to start with.

In the Wild West in the roaring '90s, two cowboys go into a saloon and one says to the other:

"Hey, look at that guy in the corner over there!"

"Which guy? There are six guys in the corner over there."

"The cowboy."

"Which cowboy? All those six guys are cowboys."

"The one with the Stetson hat."

"They've all got Stetson ha..."

The first speaker loses his temper, jerks out his .45 and shoots down five of the cowboys.

"That one over there: the one who's still standing."

"Well, what about him?"

"I hate his guts."

The next story goes down quite well when one is teaching "Food and the Menu," and points out how important it is to be able to order a meal in English.

A foreigner comes over to England without knowing a word of the language. The first time he goes into a restaurant, the horrible truth dawns: he can't order a thing, he doesn't know how to. So he listens to what the person at the next table orders and just says the same thing: "Pea soup." After three days of pea soup he decides he'd like something else for a change, so again he listens to the next table and this time he hears "Ham sandwich." Wonderful!

The waiter comes and the foreigner beams: "Ham sandwich?"

"Certainly sir," says the waiter, "white bread, or rye?"

A resigned shrug of the shoulders. "...Pea soup!"

Informative anecdotes

Again, an anecdote can serve to convey information about the country, its customs and people, as the following example may show.

On the down platform at Vauxhall Bridge station,[4] Mr. Brown sees his old friend, Mr. Smith, looking extremely depressed and down at heel.

"Good God, Smith! You look awful. What's the matter?"

"Everything! I've lost my job, the children are sick, and my wife's gone back to her mother. I'm through with life and I've come here to end it all. The very first train that comes through, I'm going to hurl myself under it."

"No! You can't! You mustn't! Don't! Surely there must be something you cling to in this life? There! What's that you're holding so carefully?"

"Egg and tomato sandwiches."

"Egg and tomato sandwiches???"

"Yes. Listen: you can starve to death waiting for a train on Vauxhall Bridge station!"

With this and most other anecdotes, the dialogue can be built up for as long as the listeners are likely to stand for it. And the experienced teacher will have spotted quite a number of items of lexis and structure in the three examples given which can be used to reinforce teaching points. Incidentally, with a little practice it becomes quite easy to adjust one's vocabulary range at each telling to a level suitable for the listeners; and that level can be surprisingly low. Thus the cowboy story—by substituting *men* for *guys*, *I don't like him* for *I hate his guts* and a few other touches—can be fitted into the first half of Book I of any English course: the important words—*cowboy*, *bar*, *colt*—are international. The essential thing is that the pupils have had their first purely English (or all-American) laugh: an enjoyable experience has been shared through the medium of the language to be learned.

Nonsense stories

A quick pure-nonsense story can be useful as a pace-breaker or corpse-reviver. Like this one:

Mother polar bear and baby polar bear are sitting on an iceberg.

"Mummy, what was Daddy?"

"Well, dear, Daddy was a polar bear, of course."

"Then, Mummy, what was Grandpa?"

"Why, he was a polar bear, too."

"And Great-Grandpa?"

"He was also a polar bear."

"Well, I can't help it, I'm cold!"

A bit surrealistic for schoolchildren, perhaps, but adults seem to like it.

A tag-question joke

To liven up a tag-question period, one can tell the joke about the waiter who asks a guest:

"What would you like, madam?"

"I'll have grilled kiddeleys, please."

"Surely, madam, you mean 'kidneys'."

"Well? I said kiddeleys, diddel't I?"

Teaching-point jokes

Which brings us back to the short joke and its use in reinforcing specific teaching points. Obviously, no exhaustive list can be given within the framework of this article, but the inventive teacher will soon compile his own and may even find himself examining every new joke he hears for usability in the classroom. Here are just two examples:

Present continuous vs. simple present

"I think the canteen cook's going mad."

"Oh? Why?"

"Whenever he peels onions, he laughs."

Use of the gerund (with possessive)

A man comes into a crowded restaurant and sits down at a table already occupied by a lady who is already eating. Without waiting for her to finish or give him permission, he lights up a particularly foul pipe.

She, sarcastically: "I hope you don't mind my eating soup while you smoke?"

He: "Fine, fine, as long as it doesn't prevent my hearing the band."

A word of warning should be uttered at this point. Telling stories successfully requires an adequate level of language performance on the part of the teacher. Those who are worried—and many who are not—about their ability to produce fluent, spontaneous English without too much effort should plan some sort of a language refresher for themselves, even if it is only a holiday in England...and not just to improve their joke-telling, either.

Stories that call for the imitation of regional dialects should be left to the good mimics in our ranks, else they will sound unconvincing, even to quite low-level students.

Of course, jokes and anecdotes are not the sole means of livening up classroom work. Guessing games (What's My Line, Twenty Questions), spelling games, or, for advanced classes, the good old-fashioned debate or disputation, can all provide a welcome break in the teaching routine. However, it should never be forgotten that all these "extra" activities are just the spice added to the fare we provide: not the meal itself. Our object is to try and make that meal more palatable by getting our pupils to enjoy sitting down to it and by varying the dishes as best we can. And if, after reading all this, there are still some teachers who want to murder their pupils, here is one final piece of advice: drive 'em to suicide, it's safer.

---

[3] J. Dakin. *The Language Laboratory and Language Learning*. London: Longman, 1973, p. 32.

[4] Near London.

NEPAL

The TESOL Wall Newspaper

David Jarmul
Laboratory High School, Kirtipur

The difference between minding to write simply and simple-minded writing is, to paraphrase Mark Twain, much like the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.

But persuading the foreign English student of this isn't easy. Especially in developing countries, English is often a prestige item, used as much to impress as to communicate.

One weapon the teacher can use to fight back, to demand clarity instead of pomposity in student writing, is the student-written English newspaper. Reason: journalism is the bastion of simple writing. No other writing form so emphasizes concise writing. As every editor knows, journalism has no place for windy sentences. Unnecessary words bore readers and cut into advertising space.

An English newspaper provides students with a chance to write about real-life situations and share their work with the community. It also serves as a forum for local news, opinions, and the like.

What's more, it's fun. For many students, it will be the first time they ever see their names "in print," be it in English or their native language. Parents and people from the bazaar like it, too. In a hill village where I introduced one high school newspaper, students at the neighboring junior college grew so jealous that they started a campus newspaper of their own.

How to do it

It's best to duplicate a newspaper so that each student has his or her own copy. Teachers in more developed countries can make use of duplicating machines or cheap print shops. But this journalism approach to teaching clear composition skills can also be applied in situations where the teacher has no more than a few sheets of large paper.

I have had considerable success in Nepal with wall newspapers, which are similar to the public posters of Peking which have gained attention worldwide.

The idea is simple. Students write news articles in English. The English teacher corrects them. The stories are then typed or neatly handwritten in narrow columns on ordinary paper. These columns are then cut out. With appropriate headlines and illustrations, they are pasted on a large sheet of paper in the typical grid form of a newspaper.

The technology is easy. But by following a few basic rules of composition, the product can look just like a real newspaper. For example, choose an appropriate name for the paper—ours is *The Lab Times*—and write it in large letters across the top. Divide the page widthwise into a fixed number of columns. Use large, catchy headlines and illustrations. Don't be afraid of blank space. It accentuates everything else and rests the eye.

Characteristics of newswriting

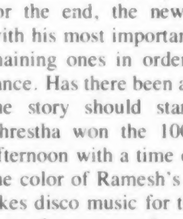
The key to an ESOL newspaper, of course, is the writing. This can include poetry, creative stories, jokes—whatever. But it is good to emphasize newswriting. This writing form, more than the others, requires the precise writing students need to practice. And a newspaper without news is like an English class without English.

Journalistic writing is different from other writing. Its overriding purpose is to explain. Something has happened. The reader asks: "What's going on? Tell me!" The writer responds with the facts, the "five W's": *who, what, where, when,* and *why,* plus *how*.

While the mystery writer saves his climax for the end, the newswriting student opens with his most important fact and prints the remaining ones in order of descending importance. Has there been a school foot race? Then the story should start like this: "Ramesh Shrestha won the 100-meter dash Thursday afternoon with a time of 11.9 seconds." Save the color of Ramesh's shirt or the fact that he likes disco music for the end of the article. If those facts get cut because of lack of space, it won't really matter.

There are other characteristics of newswriting. Sentences and paragraphs are shorter, for one. Nouns and verbs are used more than adjectives and adverbs. But the emphasis on presenting facts clearly and simply is more important than anything else.

This emphasis is excellent discipline for the ESOL student. He is forced to decide what he really wants to say. He cannot ramble. He has to list everything he wants to write, and then rank the items in order of importance.



David Jarmul teaches English at the Laboratory High School in Kirtipur, Nepal. He is a professional teacher and journalist whose articles have been printed widely. In Nepal he has experimented with and given workshops on using journalism to teach English, an idea he used while teaching Portuguese immigrants in Rhode Island. Mr. Jarmul was city editor of a San Francisco daily newspaper before going to Nepal.

Including all levels

Contributors to a school English newspaper will usually be limited to the more advanced students. But the project can include younger or lower-level students as well. Middle-level English students can be given closely structured writing assignments. Various TESOL techniques—the patterned essay, substitution tables, writing in response to a list of specific questions—will enable them to contribute stories.

Younger students can be the artists. Before putting together each new issue of the *Lab Times,* for example, I tell the beginning English students what stories we have planned for the upcoming issue. I am then besieged with crayon drawings and cutouts from magazines.

In one recent issue we ran a student editorial criticizing the food in the school canteen. The illustration, by a third grader, showed nine children turning different colors and being attacked by demons from outer space as they left the canteen. Everyone laughed when the paper was put on the wall—everyone, that is, except the cook.

POLAND

Teaching English to Students of Economics

Małgorzata Zdybiewska
*Department of Economics,
Engineering College of Radom*

One of the most serious tasks that faces every teacher of English in our department is preparing our students to read specialized texts on economics—a skill that may well prove useful in their future careers. This goal is difficult to achieve, for, although our students should have acquired competence in English during their four-year course in the secondary school, they rarely do so. As a result, the teacher cannot simply start work on the intermediate level and lead the group smoothly to the skill of reading the specialized texts; we usually need two or three terms to brush up the students' general knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Thus my colleagues and I are always desperately looking for appropriate teaching materials and better methods of teaching, which will help our students to progress and make our work a little easier.[1]

---

[1] As all teachers know, an important factor in learning any foreign language is time. If our students' 300 hours of English here were done in an intensive course, the results would be much better. But education authorities rarely take into consideration the question of intensiveness, so we have to manage somehow without changing the time structure of the course.

Malgorzata Zdybiewska teaches English as a foreign language to students of economics at the Engineering College in Radom, Poland. Her experience includes teaching English to children and adults on elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. Ms. Zdybiewska's special interest is the development of creative, cognitive techniques for teaching, including language games and all kinds of "mind stretching" exercises.

The need for expository English

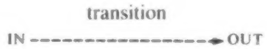
Neither the conversational English required for successful social intercourse nor the type of English found in literature is a central need for successful English-medium study. What is essential is a proficiency in the expository, neutral, transactional type of English which is the medium of education in English-speaking countries. The student needs to be able to understand the textbooks and other sources of written information, to produce essays and reports, and, in many cases, to produce adequate spoken English for taking part in discussions and reading papers.

Since our students deal mostly with expository English, the teacher's job is to prepare them to work with written texts. This can be done only in a graded program based on specialized texts. These texts can be divided into three groups according to their function in the teaching process:

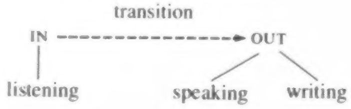
1. Short texts (200 words) collected in a textbook used for intensive reading in class, for practicing listening and reading
2. Longer texts (about 500 words) used for extensive reading by students on their own, for practicing reading and writing
3. Texts of unlimited length, to provide a basis for discussion of the students' individual and professional interests, for practicing speaking

Texts of the first type

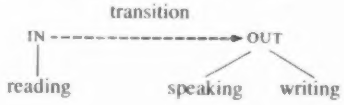
The texts for intensive study should be up-to-date and interesting.[2] Since compiling them in a textbook is a time-consuming process, I would rather have simply a collection of copies of texts and additional materials that can be changed or added to every year. I like to think of the learning process involving this first type of text in terms of the following diagram, in which IN represents the text presented to the class, OUT is the student's own production based on the text in either written or oral form, and *transition* is the formal means of presenting the text:



Texts of the first type can be used in either oral or written form. In the oral form they become mini-lectures for the students to listen to, understand, and finally to prepare a report about, either orally or in writing. The pattern of such a lesson would look like this:



These texts may also be used in written form for teaching speaking and writing:



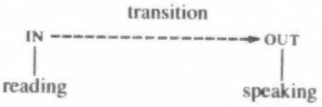
Texts of the second type

The texts of the second type are used for extensive reading, primarily at home. The purpose of these texts is to show the student how to tackle foreign-language material on economics (or any other subject) and how to make good use of a dictionary and reference books, so that he may be better prepared to read and understand the language of economics and to write clearly about what he has read. Although these texts should be suitable for the intermediate student to use by himself, they will be most effective if, after having read them at home, the student discusses them in class. These texts lead the student toward independent work. The teacher has already shown his students how to deal with a text, and now his role is simply to check their progress, not to control the teaching process.

The texts for extensive reading should cover as wide a range of topics as possible, acquainting the students with each of the fields of economics, such as banking, management, marketing, insurance, finance, etc., and its specific vocabulary. The third- and fourth-year students should read texts closely related to their specializations and master's theses. They may choose the texts themselves, which affords them practice in looking for appropriate material for their study.

Texts of the third type

The third type of text differs considerably from the previous two types. These texts, of unrestricted length, should be closely related to the students' individual and professional interests. They can serve as a starting point for class discussion. Most of the work on the texts of the second and third types is done by the students as homework, since the third- and fourth-year students meet only twice a week and there is not much time for reading the texts together in class. Texts of the third type are used to teach speaking; the pattern of such a lesson is as follows:



There is no presentation by the teacher; the transitional means are those used by the author to illustrate and support the content of the text.

A cognitive model

In conclusion I would like to stress that the three types of texts discussed above and the ways of presenting them reflect an attempt to bring the techniques of teaching into line with a more cognitive model of language teaching, which emphasizes the communicative value of language items. This contrasts strongly with a mechanistic drill/response technique, which some teachers feel eliminates all thought on the part of the learner, and therefore the ability to predict and to become independent of the teacher.

SAUDI ARABIA

Using Bulletin Boards to Advantage

Clyde D. Schabacker
University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran

Since the beginning of the year I have been experimenting with the bulletin board that was so thoughtfully placed in my classroom.

Most of the materials that I have put up are from the local newspapers, with some color items from *Time* and *Newsweek*. I have tried to avoid items of a political nature and instead have concentrated on press photos with simple one-liners, which often contain vocabulary of current use in my course. I am also using a lot of newspaper "art" such as the familiar French apple advertisement found often in the pages of the *Arab News*. Illustrations of this sort, although in black and white, catch the eye of the student as he peruses the calculated insanity of his teacher.

---

[2] I am strongly opposed to simplifying texts. The original texts can be shortened if necessary, but simplification is unnatural, and both content and language level may suffer thereby. Learning a foreign language is a creative activity which involves thinking. The students should realize that they are reading the texts not only for the sake of practice but also to learn something new and useful; they should make a conscious effort first to understand and then to remember. The teacher should provide "mind-stretching exercises" for his students and set specific tasks for them, but he should not be the central figure in the classroom, the only source of instruction and knowledge. It is high time that we started treating our students like intelligent human beings and not simply as machines that repeat language items.

In addition to these largely pictorial items I try to include a few full articles that combine an interesting headline (the bait) with a fairly simple text (the barb). I must admit that these items are of interest to only a few students who have a more advanced attitude toward English.

By far the most successful conscripts in my paper army have been the four-panel comics happily provided by the local press. The front-runners in popularity have been *B.C.*, *Hagar*, *Beetle Bailey*, and everybody's favorite: *Wizard*. My students will spend most if not all of their break time pondering these comic strips. The more adept will quickly catch the sense of the joke if not the substance. Many will be baffled by a single word or phrase, but they will ask me to explain. Some will be totally confused by this entire madness, but when I am asked to explain one comic strip there is always a second request for explanation of another.

Teaching a foreign language is difficult. Teaching a foreign sense of humor is more difficult, but it is also more valuable in facilitating the student's acceptance of the language. I sometimes feel that I have acheived the most when I have made something expressed in English make sense to a student's sense of humor. This is something he will remember. Anything else he will simply learn.

My last finding from this experiment is in the area of methodology. (Now please don't go to sleep!) When I first introduced this activity into the classroom I did so on the sly. I would enter the classroom early and staple the variously cut articles, pictures, and comics to the board, but would not call attention to them. The students eventually noticed the clippings but did not usually go up to look at them until the following day. This delay seemed to detract from their effectiveness. (My practice was to change the board weekly on Saturday morning, when I put up the clippings saved during the previous week.)

My second try was performed under a different circumstance, which inadvertently produced far greater results: one Saturday morning I was a few minutes late to class! Several of my students were also tardy, so I used this time to put up the clippings. My students' attention was riveted to that bulletin board for the rest of the day, which more than made up for our few minutes of tardiness. Now on Saturdays I have a group of eager helpers who put up the clippings under my direction, which greatly increases the amount of attention they receive.

Clyde Schabacker teaches English at the University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. He began his ESL work as a high school teacher in Guatemala, and has also taught English in public school in southern Michigan. Mr. Schabacker, a native of Detroit, Michigan, holds an M.A. in English from Eastern Michigan University.

TAIWAN

Ability-Grouping Freshman English Classes

Ling-ling Wang
National Chiao-Tung University

Traditionally, at National Chiao-Tung University as well as at most other colleges and universities in Taiwan, students of the same year and department are enrolled in the same class and attend classes together. These students, whose total scores on the joint university entrance exam are very similar, vary greatly in their scores on the individual tests that make up the exam. Thus, in the Freshman English class, students who scored 10 on the English test sit in the same class with those who scored 80. The teachers, perturbed by the problems that this great variation in proficiency causes in selecting course materials and in determing course speed, decided to group their students according to ability.

Grouping

In October 1976 the 495 freshman students from the eleven departments were ability-grouped into eleven new classes according to their scores on the English test of the joint university entrance exam. Because the large number of students made the scheduling of common class hours for eleven classes difficult, the students were divided into two sections before being grouped. Students from six departments—Electrical Physics, Electronics, Electrical Control, Electrical Communication, Computer Science, and Mechanical Engineering—were categorized as section A and grouped into classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, and A6, while students from the other five departments—Management Science, Transportation Management, Ocean Transportation, Marine Technology, and Applied Math—were categorized as Section B and grouped into classes B1, B2, B3, B4, and B5. (The class numbers indicate class levels, A1 and B1 being the highest and A6 and B5 the lowest).

Results

Teachers' Responses. Remarks concerning grouping made by teachers during formal and informal discussions may be summarized as follows:

1. The traditional class atmosphere is not felt in an ability-grouped class. With the majority of the class members coming from other departments, the students seem to be more reluctant to express themselves.

2. The English test of the university entrance exam (in multiple-choice form) is only 60–70 percent reliable for testing students' overall language ability; in almost every class the teacher found a number of students who should have been placed in a higher- or lower-level class.

3. It is not necessary to group the students into so many levels. Three levels should be enough.

4. With a narrower range of variation in the students' proficiency, the teacher no longer has to worry about students who are "too good" or "too weak" for the class.

Students' Reactions. At the end of the school year, a questionnaire comprising seven questions was distributed to the students.

To the first question, *Are you in favor of or against ability-grouping?*, 65.8 percent of the students answered "in favor of" and 29.5 percent "against."

The second question dealt with the influence of ability-grouping on the student. Among the six suggested answers, 22.5 percent selected "It had no influence on me at all"; 21.8 percent, "It stimulated my motivation to learn English"; 16.4 percent, "It increased my confidence in my English-learning capacity"; 12.6 percent, "It made me give up English"; and 7.8 percent, "It inhibited my motivation in learning English."

The third question was *Do you like to sit in class with students from other departments?*, 31.8 percent of the students answered "Yes"; 48.4 percent, "It makes no difference to me"; and 15.6 percent, "No."

The fourth question was *Does the atmosphere of an ability-grouped class deter you from asking questions in class?*, 43.5 percent answered "No"; 27.4 percent, "A little"; and 20.8 percent, "Yes."

To the fifth question, *Do you think you should have been grouped into a higher level, a lower level, or the present class?*, 46.7 percent answered "The present class"; 10.8 percent, "A higher level class"; 13.1 percent, "A lower level class"; and 20.3 percent, "The grouping should not have been made."

The sixth question was *Do you think the classes should have been grouped into fewer levels?*, 47.7 percent answered "No" and 27.4 percent, "Yes."

And to the last question, *Do you agree that the levels should be reduced to two?*, 49.4 percent answered "No," and 22.6 percent answered "Yes."

Additional remarks made by the students on the back of some of the questionnaire sheets included the following:

1. The English test of the joint university entrance exam should not be used as the sole basis for grouping.

2. The level of the class should not be re-

Ling-ling Wang has been teaching English at National Chiao-Tung University, in Hsin-chu, Taiwan, for six years. She began her career by teaching English for three years in high school, after which she studied EFL at Southern Illinois University in the United States. She says of her present work: "The students at our university are bright and industrious. I really enjoy my teaching here."

vealed so conspicuously as to be indicated by the class number.

3. A re-grouping test should be given between the two semesters as the basis for "level jumping."

4. The four-hour-a-week class should be divided into two independent units—a listening-speaking and a reading-writing class, two hours each—as students with similar overall scores often vary widely in these skills.

Discussion

Despite its shortcomings, the results of the experiment showed that ability-grouping was favored by both teachers and students. The teachers worked out some points of improvement, based on the teachers' and students' responses.

1. As the basis for grouping, the English test of the joint university entrance exam will be supplemented by a test written by the teachers. The test will comprise mainly translation questions and will be given to the students on the day they arrive.

2. The class levels will be reduced to three: high, mid, and low. The mid-level classes will consist of students from no more than three departments.

3. The level of the class will not be indicated by the class number.

4. The suggestion about the re-grouping test was not considered because of the great amount of correction work it would involve. The "too good" or "too weak" students can level-jump to a higher- or lower-level class between semesters if they obtain permission from the teachers of both classes.

5. Because of the lack of equipment for testing students' listening comprehension ability, the suggestion of dividing the class into listening-speaking and reading-writing units will not be considered for the time being.

Conclusions

Because of the favorable reactions of teachers and students, ability-grouping was tried again in the 1977–78 school year. Again, both teachers and students showed a favorable attitude toward it. And the teachers agreed in June 1978 that it should be tried for the third time in the 1978–79 school year.

THAILAND

An Approach to Group Discussion

TED GOLDENBERG
Silpakorn University

Few things please an English teacher more than to hear his students chatting away with each other—in English. Furthermore, in a content-oriented curriculum, as we have in our English for the Liberal Arts course, if students are discussing fairly serious topics, the effect is even more rewarding—for the students as well as the teacher.

There are other equally important reasons for including group discussion as an activity in English courses, and many teachers attempt to promote their students' ability to learn through discussion and various oral activities. The big problem, of course, is how to promote such abilities.

Objectives

I think my students have been successful this year because, for one thing, I have been able to formulate specific objectives. Most students, during the term, can develop a clear understanding of the objectives and how to attain them through preparation and practice in class. I did not lay all the objectives on them at once, but gradually introduced or emphasized the more difficult ones. These students learned very quickly, so their objectives for the second term consist of improvements in kind, not of anything new. Let's consider them.

First, students must be able to focus at length (fifty minutes) on a particular, serious topic of the kind traditionally associated with study in the liberal arts or humanities. For topics, I chose from Adler's list of "Great Ideas" those that I thought would be most interesting to our students. In the first term there was a variety of topics or "ideas"; this term most of the topics relate to ethics. Here is the list of topics:

First term

Week I	Nature
II	Experience
III	World
IV	Medicine
V	Family
VI	War & Peace
VII	Change
VIII	Animal
XI	Education
X	Wealth
XI	Science
Week XII	Progress
XIII	Knowledge
XIV	Wisdom (for practice exam)
XV	Happiness (final exam topic)

Second term

I	Pleasure & Pain
II	Good & Evil
III	Virtue & Vice
IV	Custom & Convention
V	Judgment
VI	Temperance
VII	Duty

Second, students must generate their own questions for each discussion. In the beginning I gave them up to ten questions to use if they chose to do so, but these were seldom enough to fill the hour, and I have reduced the number of these sample questions week by week. By the end of last term the students were using these questions only rarely.

Third, students must supply ideas in the discussion. I give them many nonfiction articles and passages to read which are related in some way to the discussion topics. But most of their questions require reflection on personal experience, belief, and knowledge gained from other sources. The nonfiction articles are primarily for developing reading skills.

Fourth, students must try to pursue the questions raised, as deeply and extensively as possible, as long as interest in the topic and further ideas about it continue. High achievement is defined in terms of follow-up questions or ideas that relate *directly* to the statement just uttered. About the only time I criticize a group after practice is when they fail to follow up on someone's important or interesting idea.

This is the most difficult objective but it is the key to a successful group discussion. It takes discipline to listen carefully to what others are saying, and patience to consider ways in which to explore the idea further. When no one has anything to say in response to a statement just made, there is a temptation to change the question or just give another answer to the original question, and ideas start getting lost or forgotten almost as soon as they appear.

Finally, there is a social objective. Everyone in the group must participate in order for anyone to be considered successful. During the discussion students are supposed to notice who isn't participating, and start directing questions to those individuals.

Evaluation

For practices during the term I give no marks, just a little encouragement and occasional suggestions to clarify what students are supposed to be doing. In fact, I hardly do anything at all. I don't even sit with the group, but remain outside it as inconspicuous as possible. I do intervene sometimes, however, when everyone seems to have forgotten the question or is uncertain whether or not to raise a new question. About once a month I am called upon to explain a term or phrase. Or, when curiosity overcomes my patience, I'll ask a follow-up question myself. But usually I can endure si-

Ted Goldenberg has taught at Silpakorn University in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, for the past six years. Mr. Goldenberg holds a Ph.D. in Education from Michigan State University, and has, as his special interest in ESL, the production aspects of language learning: writing and speaking.

lences far longer than students can.

I keep detailed records of students' participation in discussion. This enables me to determine how individuals are progressing and to evaluate the usefulness of practice with respect to achievement on the examination. Both on exams and for practices I record who speaks and whether it's a question (and what kind of question it is: new, repetitive, or follow-up) or an idea—a response to a question or a follow-up idea to the previous statement. I also note who directs questions to nonparticipants and who participates only because his or her name is called. On exams I give extra credit for particularly interesting questions or ideas.

To achieve a passing mark this term, a student needs to speak at least three times (last term only twice). For grade *C*, at least one remark must be a question, one must be an idea, one of them must follow up the previous statement, and altogether the student must speak four times. For a *B*, a student must speak six times, twice in each category. To achieve an *A* in discussion a student must speak eight times—four times in each category—*and* all other students in the group must achieve passing marks. To try to eliminate competition on the exam, I test a class half at a time (thirteen to seventeen students). Also there will be an upper limit on participation. I don't like to do this, and it's not realistic in a way. But with time limited to fifty minutes and with large numbers of highly motivated students, I want everyone to have a better chance of achieving the top mark.

Results

I expect higher achievement this term, especially with respect to follow-up ability, and also with respect to participation. Last term five students (out of sixty-one) could not pass in group discussion; this term all should pass. Last term nine achieved the *A* level in group discussion, but many more will achieve it this term.

According to my records, follow-up abilities already have improved. But there is still a problem about participation for some students. Though I am not worried about failure this term, I would like to see more improvement by those who had only average achievement last term. It does them little good to just sit in the circle. Final achievement and practice attendances correlated only +.099 (not significant), whereas final achievement and active participation in practice correlated +.273 (p .05, df=59).

Summary

Given clear aims and interesting topics, university freshmen in Thailand can achieve a most satisfactory level of skills in group discussion in English. In practices, the teacher seldom needs to intervene. The teacher's role mainly is to encourage individuals, keep records, and remain silent.

RELEVANT AND USEFUL REFERENCES

Brown, Gillian. 1978. Understanding spoken language. *TESOL Quarterly, 12*, 3. (Sept. 1978).

Galyean, Beverly. 1977. A confluent design for language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly, 11*, 2 (June 1977).

Haska, Tadusz L. 1976. (Abstract of) An investigation of the acquisition process of second language competence as reflected in second language performance. University of California, Berkeley. In *Dissertation Abstracts International, 38*, 2.

Haskell, John F. 1978. "Out of the closet" and into the school. *TESOL Newsletter, 12*, 2 (April 1978).

La Forge, Paul G. 1977. Uses of social silence in the interpersonal dynamics of community language learning. *TESOL Quarterly, 11*, 4 (Dec. 1977).

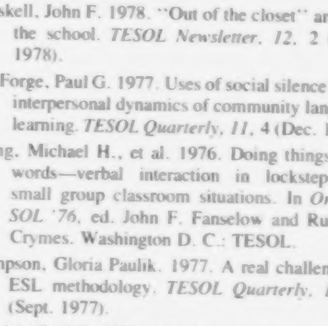
Long, Michael H., et al. 1976. Doing things with words—verbal interaction in lockstep and small group classroom situations. In *On TESOL '76*, ed. John F. Fanselow and Ruth H. Crymes. Washington D. C.: TESOL.

Sampson, Gloria Paulik. 1977. A real challenge to ESL methodology. *TESOL Quarterly, 11*, 3 (Sept. 1977).

Stevick, Earl W. 1976. Teaching English as an alien language. In *On TESOL '76*, ed. John F. Fanselow and Ruth H. Crymes. Washington D. C.: TESOL.

True, Michael. 1977. To hear a human sound. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 15*, 8 (Oct. 1977).

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ZAIRE

Teaching English Composition

MUAKA LUSALA LONA
ISP Mbanza Ngungu

The subject of teaching foreign-language learners to write compositions is characterized by two mainly contradictory views. The more widespread view holds that the learner should be given ample opportunity to "write frequently and voluminously," as Eugene Brière puts it. Behind this recommendation is the assumption that, for the beginner, quantity is more important than quality and should long precede any concern with the latter. According to this assumption the learner will gain fluency through constant practice.

The other view centers on quality, and holds that the learner should be taught to write correct English from the very beginning. I strongly disagree with this view, for I do not think that quality is as essential as quantity at the beginning stages. If, at this very elementary level, the teacher is more concerned with marking mistakes than with the content of the pupil's composition, he will dampen the pupil's enthusiasm for writing in the foreign language. It is indeed frustrating for the beginner to see his composition completely covered with red marks. Furthermore, the teacher himself may be upset—unless he agrees with E.T. Erazmus that a high incidence of errors should not be a cause for alarm, since remedial work can take the form of individual, detailed correction.

A good starting point

Nevertheless, some control by the teacher is necessary. From my own experience I would say that composition in a foreign language should begin with what Leon Cohen calls "passages in the target language as starting point." That's the way I have always taught my students to write, and I think it works quite well.

I often start by giving the learner a passage to read and become familiar with. Then I give him comprehension questions about the passage, the answers to which must be taken from the passage. That is, the learner simply reproduces the main ideas of the passage. For a beginner I omit questions of judgment such as *What do you think of...?* or *If you were...what would you have done or how would you have reacted?*

The next composition is quite similar to the previous one. If the previous composition was about, say, "John's Christmas Holidays," this one would be something like "Christmas Holidays." Each student is to write about something he did or noticed, something that happened to him, or to his family or a friend,

Muaka Lusala Lona is head of the English department at the Institut Supérieur Pédagogique of Mbanza-Ngungu, where he teaches African literature in English, writing skills, and reading. He is also deputy director of the Language Teaching Centre of Mbanza-Ngungu. Earlier, following his graduation from the National University of Zaire in 1973, Mr. Muaka taught English in secondary school. He has also studied in Scotland, where he received a postgraduate diploma in linguistics and English language teaching in 1977.

during the holidays. The composition is done as overnight homework. I write some key words on the board for those who find it impossible to begin on their own.

I have found the same technique successful with intermediate and advanced learners when they write letters in English. I provide the students with stereotyped letters of various sorts—an application for a job, an invitation, a letter of condolence, of greeting, and so on—and ask the students to imitate these letters. They produce letters as if they were really concerned about some matter, and in so doing they practice their skill of improvising.

Other techniques

Another technique I use is to divide the class into groups of five students and ask each group to write on one of the topics I put on the board. They have twenty minutes to write three paragraphs, after which one group at a time writes their composition on the board. One student from the group reads the passage aloud, then other groups read the passage, and I ask them whether they can add anything to it. Students find this activity stimulating and exciting, but the teacher must try to prevent some students from teasing others over what they have written. This technique (which was suggested to us at the IATEFL conference at Oxford in January 1977) is a good one, but in our classes of about forty students it requires more than one class session to have all the groups present their passage on the board.

Students also like writing compositions from pictures. At the beginning of the class I show the students one or more pictures and ask them to comment on them. Beginners very much enjoy such pictures as a boy climbing a mango tree or people running after a thief. The students' task is to express in writing what they have in mind within a certain number of words and a given amount of time.

While the students are busy writing, the teacher should not go around the class and read what they have written. I have noticed that when a teacher does this the student whose work is being read stops writing until the teacher moves on to the next student. Although the instant feedback by the teacher may be valuable, a learner does not like to be corrected while still working on his essay.

Correcting errors

The errors made by the learners must be corrected individually; however, some of them (if they represent common errors) can be used as illustrations for class explanation. I always ask my students to rewrite their compositions—the whole thing if it has been marked *D* (less than 50%) and only the faulty sentences if the content is comprehensible despite a few errors. Correction of errors is compulsory. I will not give a student a grade for his next composition until he has corrected the previous one.

REFERENCES

Brière, E.J. 1966. Quantity before quality in second language composition. *Language Learning, 16*, 3–4, pp. 141–51.

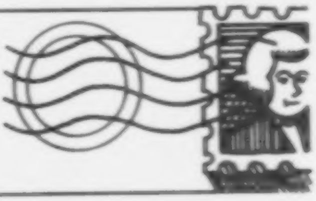
Cohen, L.J. 1950. Composition through précis writing. *Modern Language Journal, 34*, 5, pp. 389–91.

Lawrence, P. 1971. Free compositions. *English Teaching Guidance* (Tel Aviv), *22*, pp. 19–20.

Riley, P.M. 1970. The dicto-comp. *English in New Guinea, 5* (Nov. 1970), pp. 27–33. Reprinted in *English Teaching Forum, 10*, 1 (1972), pp. 21–33.

Wingfield, R.J. 1975. Five ways of dealing with errors in written composition. *English Language Teaching, 29*, 4 (July 1975), pp. 311–13.

Letters



On Teaching Poetry to Children

Calcutta, India
28 September 1979

Madam:

I was delighted to go through Miss Jean A. McConochie's article "Cottleston, Cottleston, Cottleston Pie: Poetry and Verse for Young Learners" (October 1979). Indeed, she is correct in her assessment that "poetry…is not a decorative nonessential form of language; it is, rather, of central concern in human life." This is as nice a definition of poetry as the one by a famous Victorian critic that poetry is the criticism of life. If we keep Miss McConochie's definition of poetry in mind, we shall have little difficulty in finding a meaning in teaching even what are known as nonessential verses to little boys and girls.

However, many of the poems for children are neither nonessential nor light, although to most readers they may appear to be so. Some poems intended primarily for children are not at all childish in meaning and sentiment. For example, several months ago there was a hot debate here as to whether or not these lines from the first stanza of W. H. Davies' "The Rain" had a deeper meaning to reveal:

> I hear leaves drinking rain;
> I hear rich leaves on top
> Giving the poor beneath
> Drop after drop.

However, there is no such controversy regarding the inner meaning of these lines from Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening":

> …I have promises to keep
> And miles to go before I sleep
> And miles to go before I sleep.

There are some poets whose fondness for painting pictures with the help of words is remarkable. In this, Tennyson's supremacy remains unquestioned, although others, like Spenser, Keats, Shelley, and Rossetti, also have painted superb pictures through words. A teacher can always read a poem like "The Lady of Shalott," by Tennyson, and ask the students to draw a picture of the fields of barley and rye through which a road goes to Camelot. There is a river, too, to make the picture attractive. Even some lines from Blake's "The Tiger" and Thackeray's "King Canute" can be painted:

> Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
> In the forests of the night

> "Will the advancing waves obey me, bishop, if I make the sign?"
> Said the bishop, bowing lowly, "Land and sea, my lord, are thine."
> Canute turned towards the ocean—"Back!" he said, "thou foaming brine."

In my country, children in the nursery classes are taught to memorize light verses so that they can dance; in fact, the dancing often takes priority over the words. This activity may develop the feeling in children that poetry is essentially a medium of dance and drama. Children should be taught that all poems, even the light ones, contain words that have meaning. It is the teacher's duty to convince the students that the poems are important of themselves, and that dance and drama are among many other activities that may accompany them.

There is a funny story about a young Bengalee who was sitting under a tree and reading Shakespeare. A passerby asked him, "What are you reading?" "Hamlet," was the reply. "Well," said the gentleman, "do you understand the problems of the Prince?" The young man looked baffled, and, after a pause, replied, "I read for pleasure, sir, not for understanding."

A poem is to be understood, first; if it is a good poem, it will naturally please. Tragedy, Aristotle said, pleases us through pity and fear. No such condition is necessary for a poem that pleases. The refined sensibilities of a man are mobilized by a poem that is written well. Thus, a poem pleases most when it is properly interpreted. To make the particular universal is the constant endeavor of a good poet. That means that a poem has to be properly interpreted. When Keats wants to be as steadfast as the bright star, it is the lover in him, as the lover in every human being, that speaks out. The same can be felt in Shelley's "desire of the moth for the star."

The teacher must interpret life as revealed in a poem. He must teach that the reading of a poem alone will not do; one must *feel* a poem. Therein lies the importance of identification, which implies a suspension of disbelief. A reader must identify himself with the spirit of the poem: the poem's meaning lies in this identification.

Yours truly,
Rathindranath Chattopadhyay
Head, Department of English
Krishnagar Government College, Nadia

A Response to "The Notional Syllabus"

International Teacher
Training Institute
Via Marghera 22
Rome, Italy
22 October 1979

Dear Editor:

I read with great interest the articles on the functional/notional syllabus in your April 1979 issue, but I was disturbed by several implications made in "The Notional Syllabus: Theory and Practice."

In her discussion of a pedagogical English notion list, Ms. Dobson comments, "The list does not show modal verbs and their many-faceted notions. We assume that students have gained control of modal verbs and major semantico-grammatical categories under the standard grammatical syllabus." Surely the whole point of designing a course with primary regard for conventions of *use* rather than conventions of form (such as modal verbs) is to teach grammatical form as it illustrates a particular language function, rather than teaching the paradigm for its own sake, and then applying it, as the author's statement implies should be done. David Wilkins has also made this point:

> Rather than asking *after* the grammatical foundation has been built up, "What now will the language be used for?" "What is it that people want to do with language?", this should be the *primary* consideration in the planning of courses (*Current Developments in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, English for Specific Purposes*, Modern English Publications Ltd., 1977).

Secondly, the author seems to envision the notional syllabus as a kind of graft which can be made onto a grammatical base, a sort of optional extra if one has the time ("at the earliest stages of language teaching the structural syllabus will remain . . . at the intermediate stage a structural/notional syllabus may be employed"). Dr. Finocchiaro, on the other hand, reflects the much more widely held view that the functional/notional syllabus should be implemented at the elementary level. In fact, an elementary textbook which is designed along functional lines (*Starting Strategies*) is beginning to be widely used in Europe and has had a very favorable reaction.

Finally, the teaching of notional lexis ("give a warning") rather than the communicative act itself (or as a necessary prelude to the communicative act itself)—("Watch out!")—seems to me a bit shaky. I would certainly expect my students to be able to demand something in English, to use Ms. Dobson's example, before actually learning the word *to demand*, and I think that teaching the former is unquestionably a valid classroom activity whereas familiarity with all the lexical items listed (the pedagogical English notions list) will not necessarily confer upon the learner the ability to carry out those very functions. It is one thing to learn the words *impoliteness*
discourtesy
rudeness
and quite another to act the part oneself, or to recognize the beast itself in the landscape. Moreover, as Robert O'Neill has pointed out, the label itself will often be more difficult than the language under the label.

If it is the learner's task to develop a repertory of performance strategies for coping with a foreign language, as the Council of Europe studies indicate, then classroom activities should reflect this objective by calling upon the learner to practice *doing* what will be required of him, rather than just being able to talk about doing it.

Sincerely,
Nancy Rennau Tumposky

The Author Responds

I welcome Ms. Tumposky's statement that an elementary textbook designed along functional (notional) lines is beginning to be used in Europe with favorable results. The pedagogical English notion list and explanation that she refers to in my article was reprinted from the Teacher's Guide of *Conversation in English: Professional Careers*, coauthored with Gerald S. Hawkins. This is an intermediate EFL/ESL book, and I would point out that the list clearly could not be used at the elementary level without some modification. I wholeheartedly agree with Ms. Tumposky when she says that classroom activities should call upon "the learner to practice *doing* what will be required of him," and in my notionally oriented materials I put heavy emphasis on exercises that require lively student participation in conversation, improvisation, and games.

Julia M Dobson
Washington, D.C.

A Request for Back Issues

21, Jalan Taib
Kota Kecil
Kota Tinggi
Johore
West Malaysia
16 September 1979

Dear Editor:

Who will help a Forum collector? I am just fresh from the Teachers' Training College, and this is my first year in the teaching profession.

English, in Malaysia, is fast becoming a second language. Most students are inhibited and they always speak in their mother tongue. I find Forum very educational and a great help: a teacher to teachers.

I shall be very grateful if you or other Forum readers/collectors could send me back issues of Forum (since inception?). The only copy I have is Volume XI, Number 1—February 1973.

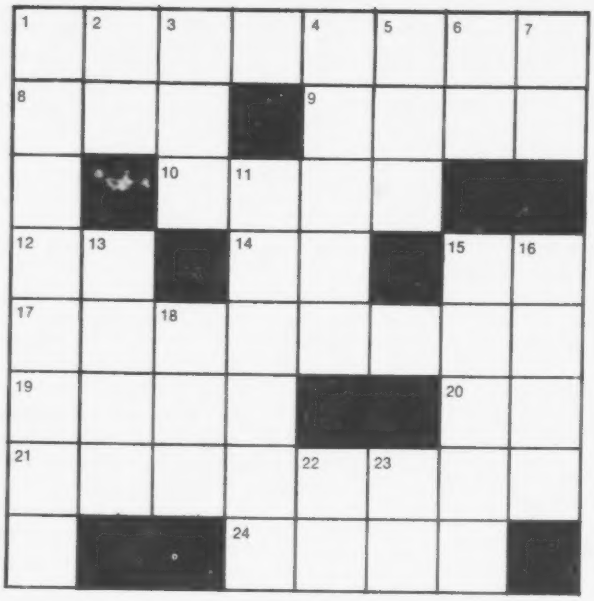
I am also writing to the American Embassy, to get on the mailing list for this highly educational magazine.

Your kind attention is highly appreciated.

Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,
Norridah Katun

“The Lighter Side”



ACROSS

1 A short narrative of some interesting or humorous incident
8 Negative
9 Inspired with reverence, wonder, or dread
10 Part of the face
12 You and I
14 Nickname for Albert, Alfred, or Alvin
15 Nickname for Edward, Edgar, or Edwin
17 Each person
19 The back part; raise, bring up
20 Teaching Assistant (abbr.)
21 Enhanced; made fuller, more meaningful, or more rewarding
24 Fly upward; glide; rise high into the air

DOWN

1 Replied
2 Negative
3 And so forth (Latin abbreviation)
4 Every day
5 Possess
6 Two-thirds of ten
7 Past-tense ending
11 Surname; a kind of tweed
13 Level, smooth, regular; opposite of *odd*
15 Come or go into
16 Not alive
18 Organ of hearing
22 Company (abbr.)
23 Half a laugh

Solution appears elsewhere in this issue.

SHAGGY DOGS AND SUCH

A ventriloquist sold his performing dog as a “talking dog” to a man who wanted the animal to show off with. The dog looked up at his master and said reproachfully: “You mean, despicable man, to sell me for ten dollars after all I’ve done for you? So help me Moses, I’ll never speak another word as long as I live.” And he didn’t.

(From *Illinois Central Magazine* [1913] as quoted in Botkin, *Treasury of American Anecdotes*)

* * *

A man went away for the weekend. He arrived rather late, after dinner. The other members of the house party were all sitting around in the living room, and at one end of the room a game of poker was in progress. One of the players was a dog.

After he had been introduced all around, the man said to his host: “What a wonderful dog! He must be very intelligent to be able to play poker.”

“Well, he’s not a very good player, really,” replied the host, “because whenever he gets a good hand he wags his tail.”

* * *

A dog and a parrot are brought into a bar one day by a regular customer, who, having ordered his drink, says to the dog, “Now, Fido!” And the dog starts a lively conversation with the bird.

The performance ends. One of the other customers turns to the owner of these remarkable creatures: “Say! That’s really something.”

“Well, it’s not as cute as all that. You see, the act isn’t on the level.”[1]

“No?”

“No. The dog is a ventriloquist.”

* * *

A man went to visit a friend and was amazed to find him playing chess with his dog. He watched the game in astonishment for a while. “I can hardly believe my eyes,” he exclaimed. “That’s the smartest dog I’ve ever seen.” “Aw, he’s not so smart,” the friend replied. “I’ve beaten him three games out of five.”

* * *

A professor tried to train his donkey to get along without eating, by gradually cutting down on his food. When the animal dropped dead of starvation, he said, “An irreplaceable loss! Just when he had learned not to eat, he died.”

* * *

A professor met a friend and exclaimed, “I heard you had died.”

“But you see I’m alive,” smiled the friend.

“Impossible,” decided the professor. “The man who told me is much more reliable than you are.”

---

1. *isn’t on the level* = isn’t what it seems to be; is a deception.

Correction

Readers of Kim Haeng Jung's article, "A Paper-Scrap Approach to Internalizing Language Structures," in our July 1980 issue may have been perplexed by the cards designated "8" in each of his examples, since they appear to carry no information. In fact, each of these cards is supposed to carry a dot representing a period (end of sentence). These periods, which were visible on the printer's blueprints when we checked them, were apparently erased at the last minute by an overly zealous worker who viewed them as specks of dirt! Our apologies to Mr. Kim and to our readers for this unfortunate omission.

Acknowledgments

"Joke Telling as a Tool in ESL," by Susan Trachtenberg, is reprinted, with certain editorial changes, from *TESOL Quarterly, 13,* 1 (March 1979).

"Why Murder Your Pupils When They Can Laugh Themselves to Death?" by Peter Fischel, is reprinted, with certain editorial changes, from *Praxis des Neusprachlichen Unterrichts* (4/1977). Used by permission.

In accordance with the copyright law effective 1 January 1978, any article in this issue *not attributed to another source, either in the acknowledgments above or elsewhere in these pages,* may be reprinted if permission to do so is obtained from the author. Permission to reprint articles from another source must be obtained from the original publisher.

The ENGLISH TEACHING FORUM, a quarterly journal for the teacher of English outside the United States, is provided by the Embassy of the United States of America located in the country of distribution. Occasional copies and regular subscriptions are available through the Embassy.

Manuscripts and letters to the editor should be sent to Room 752, 1717 H Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20547. To be considered for publication, manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced with margins of at least three centimeters. Questions about subscriptions should be addressed to the American Embassy in the capital city of the country in which the inquirer resides. Requests for subscriptions should *not* be sent to the editor.